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European Semester 2017/2018 Country Fitch on Disability : Finland

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The Academic Network of European Disability Experts of the European Commission
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European Semester 2017/2018 country fiche on disability	
Finland	
Report prepared by: Katja Valkama, Hisayo Katsui & Teppo Kröger	
With comparative data provided by the ANED core team	

The [Academic Network of European Disability experts](#) (ANED) was established by the European Commission in 2008 to provide scientific support and advice for its disability policy Unit. In particular, the activities of the Network support the development of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 and practical implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People in the EU.

This country report has been prepared as input for the European Semester from a disability perspective.

Note:

The statistics provided in October 2017 are based on the EU-SILC 2015. This is the most recent microdata available to researchers for analysis from Eurostat. This report may be updated as new data becomes available.



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1 Summary of the overall situation and challenges

The goal of the Government of Finland is to prevent work incapacities and improve labour market opportunities for people with partial work abilities and to prolong their careers. This program is based on OECD's analysis on Finland's economic sustainability and labour market. Finland was recommended to review its disability pension entitlement and to reduce the number of older workers leaving the workforce due to disability.¹ OECD also recommended Finland to phase out the option to extend unemployment benefits until retirement, and limit rights to disability pensions to medical reasons only².

The employment rate of 58.4% of people with partial work incapacity is reasonably good compared to the 70% rate among the whole population in 2014. 7.17% of people with partial work incapacity were registered as job seekers and, in all, 41.6% of all people with partial work incapacity were economically inactive or unemployed. Of the unemployed population, 190,000 were job seekers. The number of economically inactive and unemployed disabled people (236,886) is greater than the number of non-disabled unemployed (218,000). 21.6% of all registered job seekers have some sort of incapacity.

The educational challenge is significant, since only modest efforts have been made to include moderately and severely disabled young people into upper secondary and tertiary education. This is in clear conflict with governmental policy that speaks for the inclusion of young people and other groups in difficult labour market situations. Nevertheless, new amendments to improve access to the labour market and rehabilitative education services have been implemented.

In order to lower the risk of poverty or social exclusion of disabled people, more synergy between education and employment policy is required. Along with work opportunities, there is a need for alternative solutions to create social wellbeing for disabled people who face challenges to access the labour market conditioned by the standards of non-disabled people. It is also crucial to consider the welfare system from the perspective of disabled people. The social and health care system of Finland is currently going through a major reform, which will thoroughly transform the administration and provision of all social and health care, including services for disabled people. However, the consequences of this reform for disabled people are very unclear. Disabled people and their organisations have not been properly included in the preparation of this reform, either. For disabled persons to gain full citizenship and access to the society, alterations are required in the current model of procurement of services, in modes of service provisions and overall in inclusion and accessibility of the society.

¹ OECD Economic Surveys. Finland. February 2014. Overview
http://www.oecd.org/economy/surveys/Overview_Finland_2014.pdf.

² OECD Economic Surveys. Finland. January 2016. Overview
<https://www.oecd.org/economy/surveys/Overview-OECD-Finland-2016.pdf>

2 Assessment of the situation of disabled people with respect to the Europe 2020 headline targets

2.1 Strategic targets

Table 1: Europe 2020 and agreed national targets for the general population

	Europe 2020 targets	National targets ³
Employment	75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed	78%
Education	Reducing the rates of early school leaving below 10%	8%
	At least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education	42% (narrow national definition)
Fighting poverty and social exclusion	At least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion	760,000 persons living at risk of poverty or social exclusion, equivalent to an absolute decrease by 150,000 persons

Relevant disability targets from national strategies or sources:

The disability program of The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health for 2010–2015⁴ states the main targets for employment, education and social inclusion but these are not quantified. The final report of this Disability Policy Programme (VAMPO)⁵ examined the realisation of these goals. According to this report, the main achievement from the perspective of disabled people was the implementation of the guaranteed pension, which secured a minimum level pension to all pensioners and thus increased the pension level of many disabled people.

Encouraging and promoting career opportunities for people with partial work abilities is one of the key objectives of the Government's strategic programme for 2015–2018.⁶ Many of its targets are general social and civil rights. In addition, there are certain mandatory objectives, such as accessibility, related to the quality of life regulated by the Land Use and Building Act 117 e § (1999/132)⁷ and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Finland ratified on 11 May 2016 and that entered into force on 10 June 2016.

Employment

- Work is a basic right for disabled persons;

³ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/targets_en.pdf.

⁴ Vahva pohja osallisuudelle ja yhdenvertaisuudelle. Suomen vammaispoliittinen ohjelma VAMPO 2010-2015 [Finland's disability policy program] <http://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/112497>.

⁵ Suomen vammaispoliittinen ohjelman VAMPO 201 – 2015 loppuraportti (Final report of the Finland's Disability Policy Programme). Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö. <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-00-3706-2>

⁶ Finland – a land of solutions. Strategic Programme of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä's Government 2015. <http://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/sipila/government-programme>

⁷ Land Use and Building Act 132/1999 [https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1999/19990132?search\[type\]=pika&search\[pika\]=esteett%C3%B6myys](https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1999/19990132?search[type]=pika&search[pika]=esteett%C3%B6myys).



- The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, together with the employment authorities, need to develop job-hunting services that suit better disabled people;
- Employers ought to develop accessible workplace environments with required daily support for disabled workers;
- Necessary language interpretation services should be provided by employers;
- The employment service law has been revised so that an employee's disability is no longer a status barrier for employment services and availability in the labour market;
- The Minister of Health and Social Affairs' program of partial work ability aims to improve the employment services for disabled job seekers.

Education

- Disabled people require the necessary support to be included in primary and secondary education. This requires training of teachers and other staff.
- Officials should make more efforts to support the schooling and work of disabled people by, for example, improving both educational and career counselling.
- The connection between vocational special training and working life needs to be strengthened.
- At the primary level of education disabled children should have morning and evening activities in local schools.

Poverty and Social Exclusion

- Prevention of poverty is based on means-tested disability benefits by the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela).
- The social exclusion strategy emphasises independent living, social inclusion, accessibility and anti-discrimination acts.
- Services of a disabled person must be arranged so that they support independent living. Accessibility is an important part of this strategy. Accessibility also supports social inclusion when basic services are easy to reach and use.
- Public premises and public transportation are required to be accessible in order to enable physical mobility.

2.1.1 A note on the use of EU data

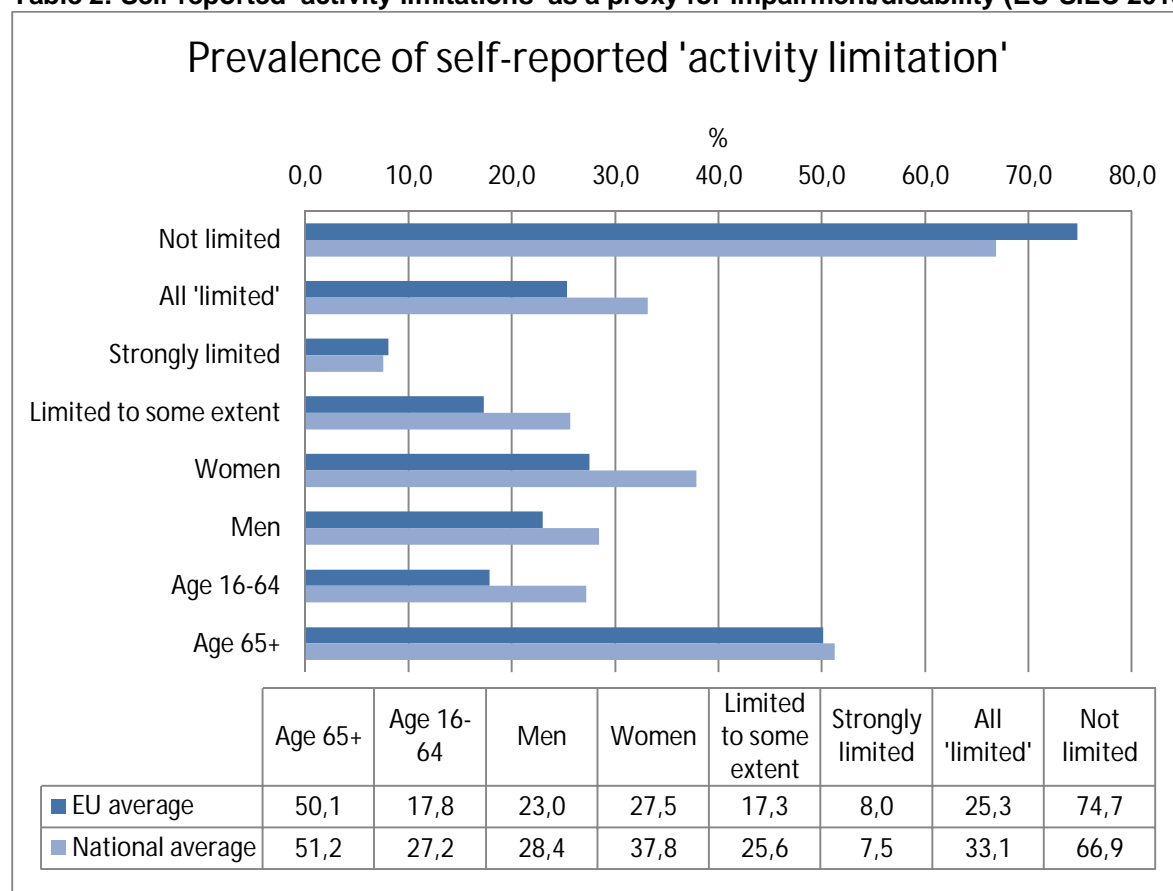
Unless specified, the summary statistics presented in this report are drawn from 2015 EU-SILC micro data.⁸ The EU-SILC sample includes people living in private households and does not include people living in institutions. The proxy used to identify people with disabilities (impairments) is whether 'for at least the past 6 months' the respondent reports that they have been 'limited because of a health

⁸ EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017

problem in activities people usually do'.⁹ Responses to this question vary between countries and national data sources are added for comparison, where available.

In 2015, there was a break in the German data (with significantly reduced prevalence estimates). As Germany is a very large country, this affected both the German national indicators and EU average indicators for this year. For example, the EU28 average disability prevalence indicator decreased between 2014 and 2015 but increased, as in previous years, if Germany is excluded. A similar trend is evident for the EU average employment rate of persons.

Table 2: Self-reported 'activity limitations' as a proxy for impairment/disability (EU-SILC 2015)



Source: EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017

Note: the Finnish disability prevalence estimates are well above the EU28 average for the working age population, although close to the average for older persons. This might affect the estimation of comparative outcome indicators based upon these.

In subsequent tables, these data are used as a proxy to estimate 'disability' equality in the main target areas for EU2020 – employment, education and poverty risk.¹⁰ The tables are presented by disaggregating the estimated proportion of people who report

⁹ The SILC survey questions are contained in the Minimum European Health Module (MEHM) [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Glossary:Minimum_European_Health_Module_\(MEHM\)](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Glossary:Minimum_European_Health_Module_(MEHM))

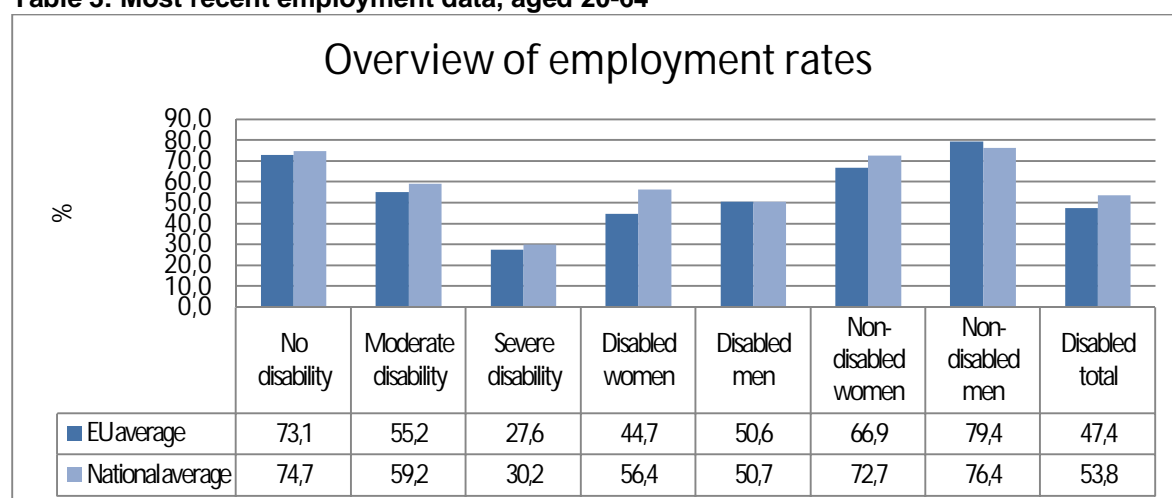
¹⁰ The methodology is further explained in the annual statistical reports of ANED, available at <http://www.disability-europe.net/theme/statistical-indicators>

and do not report limitations for each indicator (e.g. among those who are employed, unemployed, at risk of poverty, etc.).

2.2 Employment data

The most recent employment data of population aged between 20 and 64 years with the disaggregation of gender, disability and severity of disabilities are compiled in the below Table 3. Even though employment situation of disabled people in Finland is better than the European average, the data shows that the employment opportunities of disabled people in Finland are clearly more limited compared with non-disabled people: 53.8% of disabled people are employed, while 74.7 % of non-disabled people are employed. Persons with moderate disabilities have better employment opportunities compared with persons with severe disabilities: 59.2% of persons with moderate disabilities are employed, while 30.2% of persons with severe disabilities are employed. There is a gap between disabled men and women in favour of the latter: 50.7% for disabled men and 56.4% for disabled women. In the European average, disabled men have better opportunities of employment than disabled women: 50.6% for disabled men and 44.7% for disabled women.

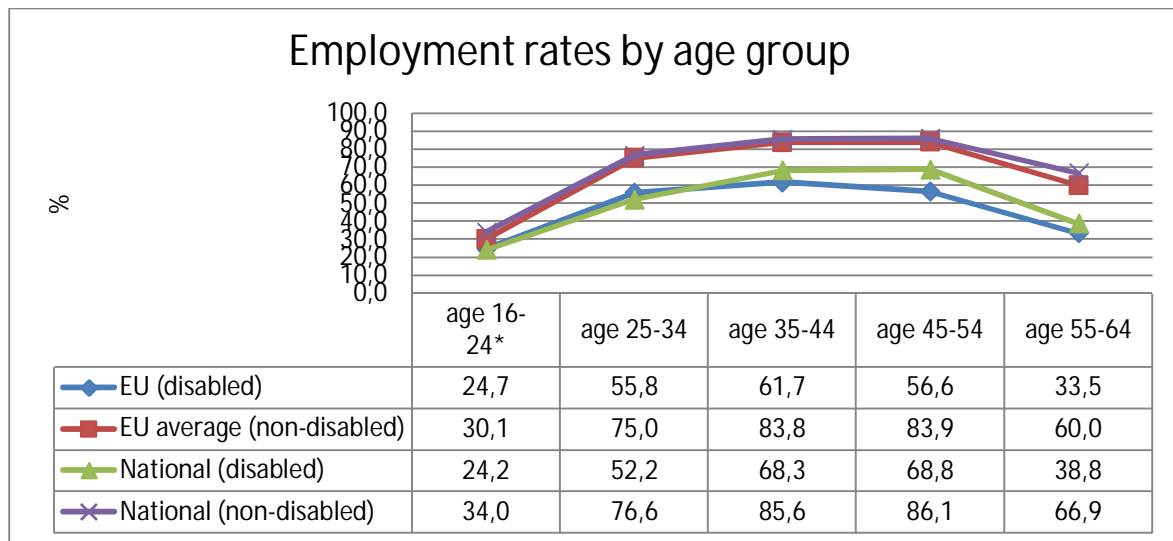
Table 3: Most recent employment data, aged 20-64



Source: EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017

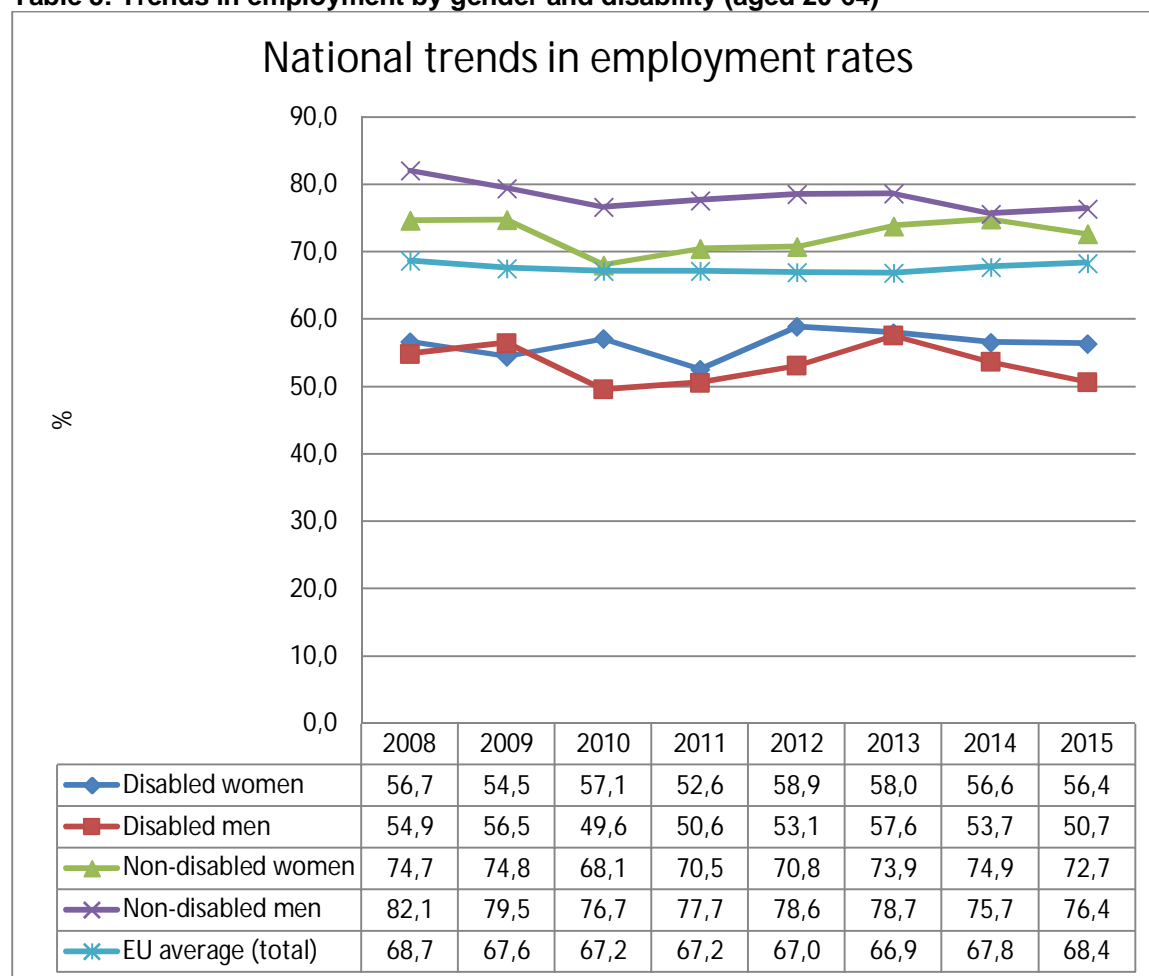
The below Table 4 shows the compilation of data on the employment rate by age groups (16-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, and 55-64). The data show that non-disabled people in Finland have better employment opportunities than the European average at all age groups. When it comes to disabled people, Finnish disabled people have less employment opportunities at younger ages (16-24 and 25-34) but better employment opportunities at older ages (35-44, 45-54, and 55-64). At all ages, Finnish disabled people have much fewer opportunities of employment compared with Finnish non-disabled people.

Table 4: Employment rate data, by age group



Source: EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017

The below Table 5 shows the compilation of data on the trends in employment by gender and disability aged 20-64. The European average has been consistently around 67-69 %. The Finnish employment rates for both men and women have been consistently better than the European average by several percentages. As for the employment rates of disabled men and women, they have been consistently lower than the national and European average. Disabled women have better changes than disabled men do.

Table 5: Trends in employment by gender and disability (aged 20-64)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017 (and preceding UDBs)

The table above (Table 5) shows a comparison of national employment trends for disabled and non-disabled women and men, and compares this with the EU2020 headline indicator for the EU as a whole.

Alternative data on disability and employment provided by the national expert:

The national data on employment rates of disabled people is fragmented and sometimes based on estimates of the officers. The data lacks the distinctions and categories used in EU-SILC. Therefore, the comparisons are approximate. Different categorizations used by Finnish administration causes problems. EU-SILC definition of disability (impairment) is wider than the concept of “people with partial work incapacity” used by Finnish administration, as in Labour Force Survey methodology there is a larger group of people who report ‘limitations’ in everyday activities and a smaller sub-group who report ‘work limitations’. In EU-SILC statistics, the concept of disability means a limited health condition for any reason; it does not refer to disabilities as medically diagnosed conditions. A diagnosed condition, however, is required in the Finnish system. Thus, EU-SILC gives a more optimistic view about the employment rates of disabled people because it considers also people with low level of impairment protected by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Moreover, the reported disability rate of Finland is much higher than the

EU average in EU-SILC, which may imply that the criteria used to indicate impairment is looser, as people may have reported minor temporary illnesses.

The Ministry of Employment and the Economy and Statistics Finland can provide estimates of the employment situation of disabled people. More or less, these figures have remained constant since mid-1990 regardless seasonal variation. According to combined data estimates of the Statistics Finland and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, there were 333,974 employed people with partial work incapacity, which is 58.4% of all 571,860 people with partial incapacity in 2014. The amount is estimated from the study of Statistics Finland (2011), which claims that 18% of people 20–64 year old have an impairment disadvantaging working. The study is based on a sample of self-reporting people and, that is why, it cannot represent explicitly the whole population.^{11 12 13} It is unlikely that the amount of people with partial work incapacity has changed significantly since.

The National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL in Finnish) provides information that among about 70,000 persons with disabilities who have the full capacity to work, only 60% are employed.¹⁴

The problem is that these numbers include also people who receive disability pension or partial disability pension depending on the degree of disability (236,886). Thus, the rate is rather high as it includes all those who are qualified to receive the disability tax reduction. Roughly, 40,000 disability pensioners were also working in 2014.^{15 16} In addition, studies (Eurostat 2003; OECD 2010; Taskinen 2012) indicate that the rate of disability is high in Finland.^{17 18 19} As Pertti Taskinen (2012) puts it: “Finnish people are conscientious to report their impairments”. This may create cultural biases in EU comparisons.

¹¹ Tötterman, Patrik (2015). Unpublished estimates of combined data on employment of people with partial work incapacity and of disability pensioners (counselling). The Ministry of Employment and the Economy.

¹² Taskinen, Pertti (2012) Osatyökykyisillä on työhaluja terveysongelmista huolimatta [Report on people with partial work incapacity]. Tilastokeskus [Statistics Finland]. http://www.stat.fi/artikkelit/2012/art_2012-12-10_005.html?s=1.

¹³ Statistics Finland (2015) Finland's population was 5,471,753 at the turn of the year. 27 March. http://www.tilastokeskus.fi/til/vaerak/2014/vaerak_2014_2015-03-27_tie_001_en.html.

¹⁴ THL. (2017) Työllistyminen ja toimeentulo. <https://www.thl.fi/fi/web/hyvinvointi-ja-terveyserot/eriarvoisuus/vahemmistot/vammaisuus/tyollistyminen>

¹⁵ Tötterman, Patrik (2015). Unpublished estimates of combined data of employment of people with partial work incapacity and of disability pensioners (counselling). The Ministry of Employment and the Economy.

¹⁶ Statistics Finland (2015) Finland's population was 5,471,753 at the turn of the year. 27 March. http://www.tilastokeskus.fi/til/vaerak/2014/vaerak_2014_2015-03-27_tie_001_en.html.

¹⁷ Eurostat (2003) Statistics in focus. Population and social conditions. Theme 3–26/2003. Eurostat.

¹⁸ OECD (2010) Sickness, Disability and Work: Breaking the Barriers. A Synthesis of findings across OECD countries.

¹⁹ Taskinen, Pertti (2012) Osatyökykyisillä on työhaluja terveysongelmista huolimatta [Report on people with partial work incapacity]. Tilastokeskus [Statistics Finland]. http://www.stat.fi/artikkelit/2012/art_2012-12-10_005.html?s=1.



Statistics Finland conducted the last study on impairments and working in 2012.²⁰ This old Finnish data from the year 2000 supports EU-SILC data regarding the minimal difference between employment of disabled men and women.²¹ The report also points out the employment differences between different educational backgrounds. Higher educational degrees indicate better employment among disabled people. The worst situation is among the people who have no degree after elementary education. However, highly educated severely disabled people have no disadvantage in employment, but disabled people, in general, are less likely to be entrepreneurs than non-disabled people are.

2.2.1 Unemployment

National administrative rules and definitions of ‘unemployment’ vary, and these may affect the way in which disabled people are categorised in different countries. The following tables compare national data with the EU2020 headline indicator for the EU.

The below Table 6 shows the data on the most recent unemployment rates of people aged 20-64. The data reflect of the employment rates showed in Table 3 as above. Unlike the European average, both disabled and non-disabled women are unemployed to a lesser extent than disabled and non-disabled men respectively. In Europe, women’s unemployment rates are worse than those of men. Disabled women in Finland have better situation than those in Europe in general, while disabled men in Finland have worse situation than those in Europe in general. Disabled people are two times more likely to be unemployed than non-disabled peers in both Finland and in Europe.

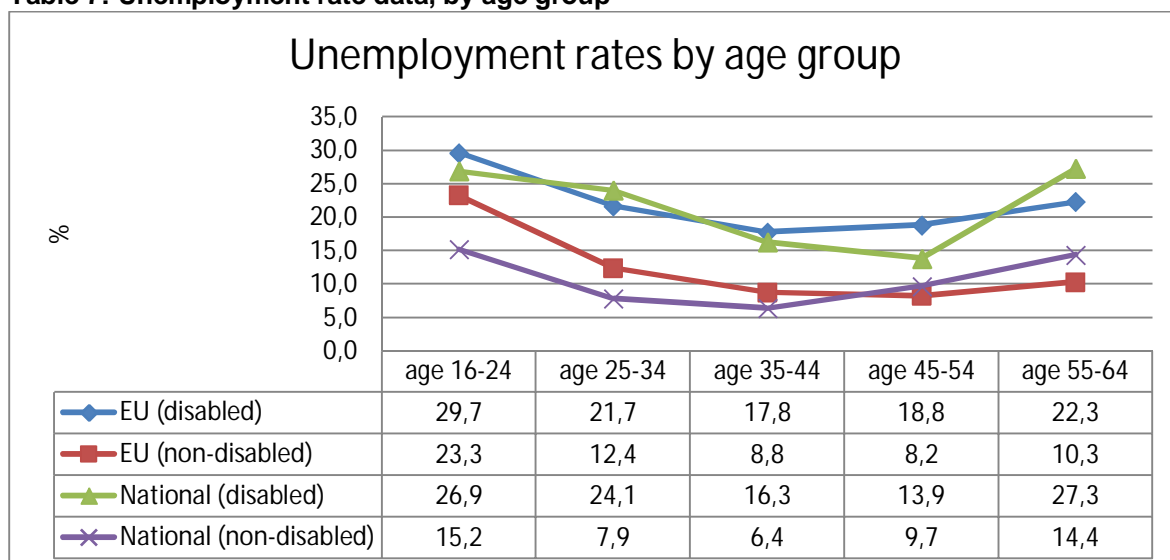
²⁰ Taskinen, Pertti (2012) Osatyökykyisillä on työhaluja terveysongelmista huolimatta [Report on people with partial work incapacity]. Tilastokeskus [Finnish statistical service center Statistics Finland] http://www.stat.fi/artikkelit/2012/art_2012-12-10_005.html?s=1.

²¹ Linnakangas, Ritva; Suikkanen, Asko; Savtschenko, Victor; Virta, Lauri (2006) Uuden alussa vai umpikujassa? Vammaiset matkalla yhdenvertaiseen kansalaisuuteen. Stakes. [Socioeconomic situation of disabled people in Finland] <https://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/77056>.

Table 6: Most recent unemployment data, aged 20-64

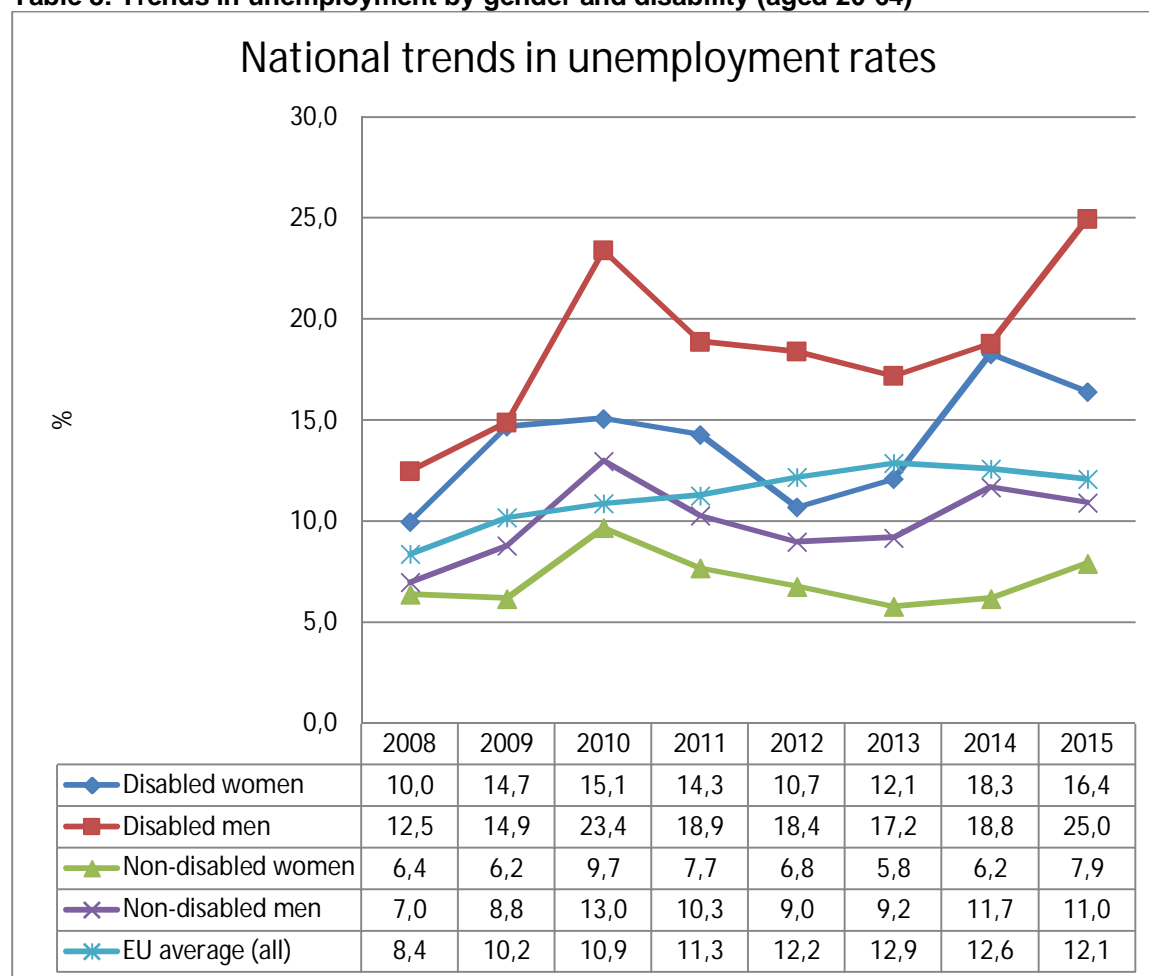
Source: EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017

The below Table 7 shows the data on unemployment rates by age groups (16-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64). Both in Europe in general and in Finland, unemployment rates of disabled people are higher than those of non-disabled people in all age groups without exception. In Finland, the gap is bigger than that in Europe.

Table 7: Unemployment rate data, by age group

Source: EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017

The below Table 8 show the data on trends of people aged 20-64 in unemployment by gender and disability. The unemployment rates of disabled men and women are worse than the European average, while those of non-disabled men and women are better. Both disabled and non-disabled women are in better conditions than disabled and non-disabled men respectively. In 2015, the gap between disabled men and women increased quite steeply from 18.8% of 2014 to 25.0%.

Table 8: Trends in unemployment by gender and disability (aged 20-64)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017 (and preceding UDBs)

Fluctuations in the gendered trends for people with impairments should be treated with caution, although the pattern is somewhat similar for those without. It is difficult to interpret the national disability trends very precisely.

Alternative data on disability and unemployment from national sources:

The data sources are the same as those mentioned above. The data is based on a sample from 2011, according to which there were 18% of people who reported a limitation in labour market. Unfortunately, only the amount of registered job seekers was updated. There were averagely in a month 41271.75 people with partial work incapacity who were unemployed registered job seekers in 2015, which is 7.22% of all of them.²² However, the rate of all non-working people with partial work incapacity (unemployed and economically inactive) was approximately 41.6%, 236,886, of all disabled people (including pensioners) in 2014 according to the estimates of the ministry. There is no indication of dramatic change for this figure in 2015, as the unemployment rate of registered job seekers has remained rather same since 2014 and before.

²² Tötterman, Patrik (2016) Unemployment data on special groups (counselling). The Ministry of Employment and the Economy.

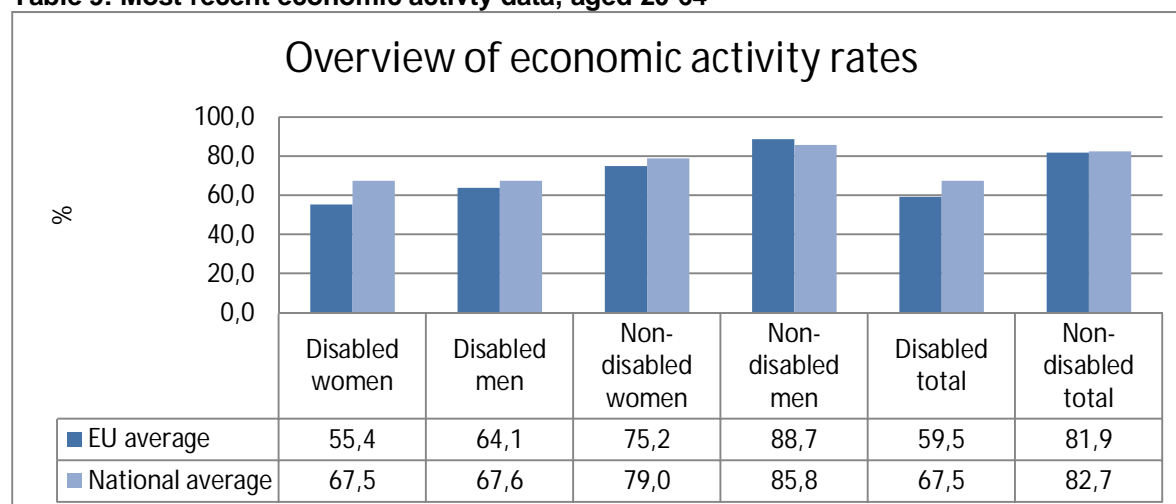
The ministry's data^{23 24} show that economic cycles do not change radically the unemployment rates of people with partial work incapacity the same way they do on non-disabled people. According to the ministry, people with partial incapacity are more likely to have prolonged unemployment periods, which less frequently end up in employment. It is two times more likely that a person with partial incapacity becomes a long-term unemployed than a non-disabled person. Unemployment of a person with partial incapacity ends usually with employment promotion measures, for instance rehabilitative work activity or work trial.²⁵

Both EU-SILC and the national data lack a dynamic illustration of disabled people's unemployment periods, since unemployment is a changing factor in people's life. It would be useful to see the variations of unemployment periods (cf. Räsänen & Sardar 2014).²⁶

2.2.2 Economic activity

The below Table 9 shows the most recent economic activity data of people aged 20-64 in Finland and Europe on average. The data is disaggregated by gender and disability. In the comparison between Finland and European average, Finnish people are more economically active in all groups except for non-disabled men. In both Finnish and European statistics, both non-disabled men and women are more economically active than disabled men and women. The gap is rather big.

Table 9: Most recent economic activity data, aged 20-64



Source: EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017

²³ Tötterman, Patrik (2013) An unpublished comparative graph of the employment development of people with partial work incapacity and non-disabled people.

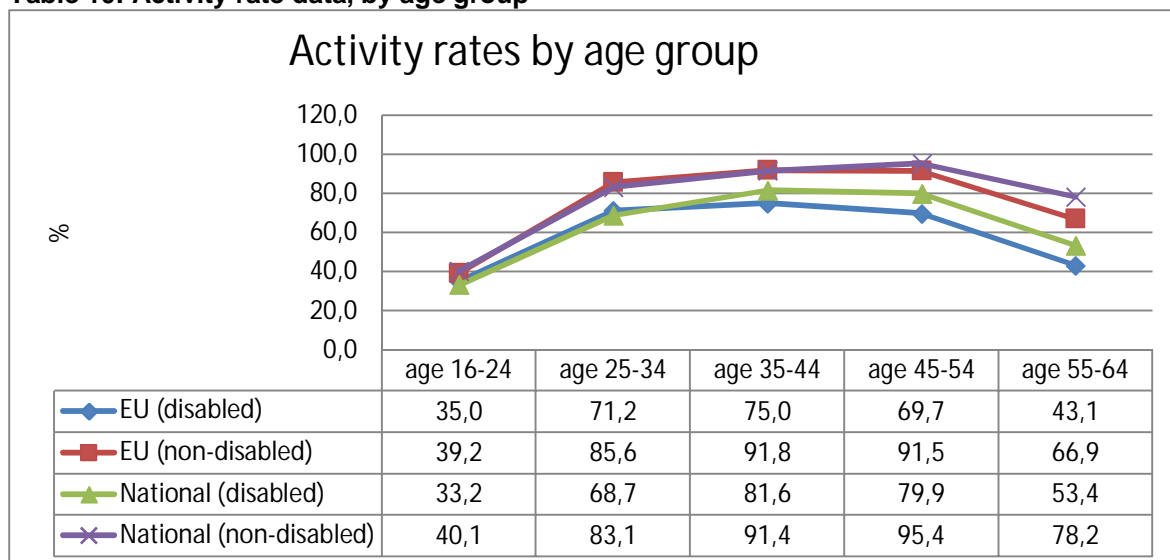
²⁴ Vates-säätiö (2013): The Ministry of Employment and the Economy (2001-2012) <http://www.vates.fi/cntum/documents/52506/Tilastokooste%2020202013.pdf>.

²⁵ Tötterman, Patrik (2015) Unpublished data of employment of people with partial incapacity (interview). The Ministry of Employment and the Economy.

²⁶ Räsänen, Heikki & Sardar, Paula (2014) Virta-varanto –kaaviot TEM:n työnvälityksen tilastojärjestelmässä – käsitteitä, sovelluksia ja tulkintoja. TEM-analyysija 55. [Statistical analysis tool of unemployment in Finland] <https://www.tem.fi/files/39023/Virta-varanto-kaaviot.pdf>.

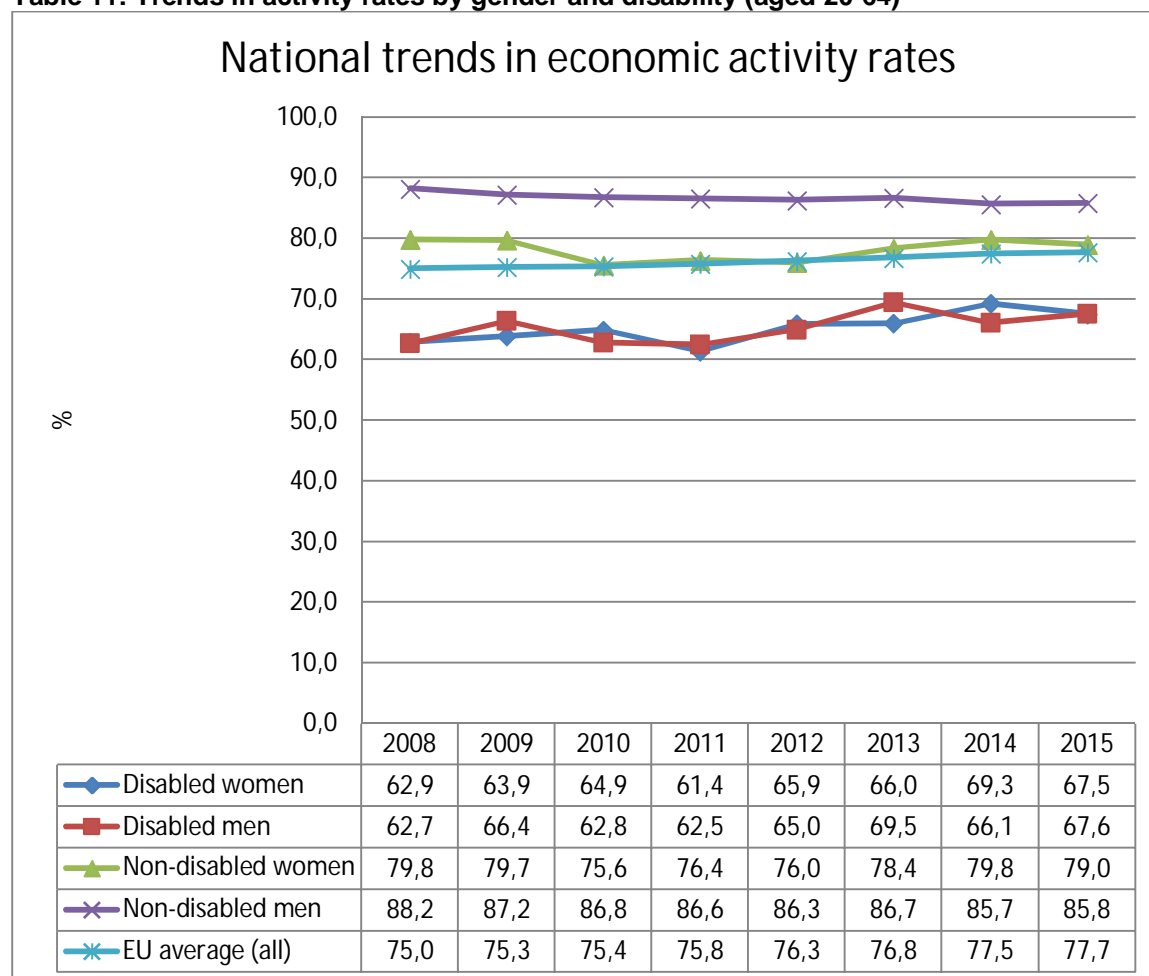
The below Table 10 shows the activity rates of Finnish and European people by different age groups (16-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54 and 55-64). In both Finland and European countries, the activity rate of non-disabled people is better than that of disabled people. Finnish non-disabled people and disabled people are better in the activity rate than non-disabled people and disabled people in Europe on average. At the age of 16-24, the gap among different groups is smaller, while that the gaps increase toward the age 55-64.

Table 10: Activity rate data, by age group



Source: EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017

The below Table 11 shows the trends in economic activity rates of people aged between 20 and 64 in Finland in comparison with the European average. Non-disabled men and women score better than disabled men and women respectively throughout the years between 2008 and 2015 in Finland. Both groups of non-disabled people score better than the European average throughout the years. For disabled people the data are improving, while for non-disabled people, especially for non-disabled men, the data show a negative development.

Table 11: Trends in activity rates by gender and disability (aged 20-64)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017 (and preceding UDBs)

Alternative data on disability and economic activity provided by the national expert:

The data sources are the same as in the previous section. The sample of the ministry's research in 2011 indicates that there were approximately 333,974 (58.4%) employed people with partial work incapacity in 2014 supposing that the rates are rather same than in 2011. In addition, according to the ministry's updates, there were 41271.75 (7.22%) registered unemployed job seekers with partial work incapacity in 2015. So, without unlikely changes since in total ca 375,000 economically active people with partial work incapacity were in the labour market. Among the 571,860 people with partial work incapacity there were 236,886 disability pensioners and 40 000 of them were employed in 2014.

The degree of impairment predicts the chance of employment. Severely disabled people have lower economic activity, partly because of the disability pension. If one's illness/impairment becomes persistent, it is possible to apply for a disability pension. This is payable both in the form of an earnings-related pension and as a flat rate national pension. One can receive disability pension if earnings before taxes do not exceed €746.57 per month or earnings are less than 40% of former regular

earnings.²⁷ OECD has hinted the advantages of a single working-age benefit against separate disability pension such as the one in use in Finland.²⁸

2.3 Education data

EU statistical comparisons are more limited concerning the education of young disabled women and men in the EU2020 target age groups. Data is available from EU-SILC (annually) as well as from the Eurostat Labour Force Survey ad-hoc disability module (for 2011), but with low reliability for several countries on the key measures.²⁹ Using a wider age range can improve reliability but estimations by gender remain indicative. EU trends are evident, but administrative data may offer more reliable alternatives to identify national trends, where available. Confidence intervals for the disability group are wide on both indicators at the national level but reliable at the EU level. An average over several years may provide a more robust national indication.

There was also a change from ISCED 1997 to ISCED 2011 qualification definitions in 2014 although some Member States continued to use the older definition in 2015.

2.3.1 Early school leavers

The EU-SILC sample for the target age group (aged 18-24) includes the following number of people reporting activity 'limitation' (as a proxy for impairment/disability).

Table 12: EU-SILC sample size in the target age group 18-24 versus 18-29

	Age 18-24		Age 18-29	
	No activity 'limitation'	Activity 'limitation'	No activity 'limitation'	Activity 'limitation'
EU sample	32,733	2,673	54,418	4,840
National sample	707	123	1,161	256

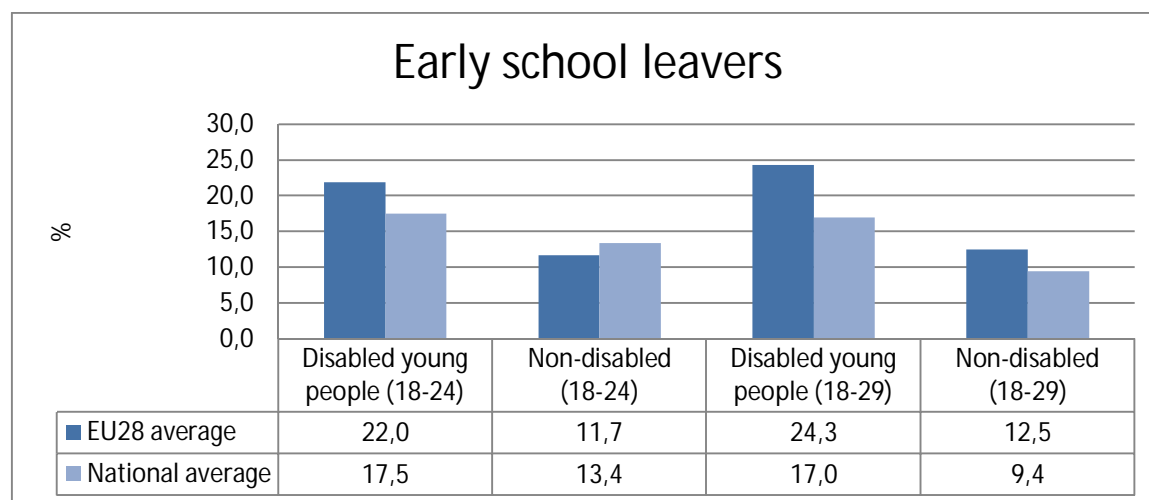
Source: EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017

The below Table 13 shows early school leavers in Finland and in Europe. The age groups include 18-24 and 18-29. Finnish early school leavers among disabled young people both aged 18-24 and 18-29 are less than the European average. However among the non-disabled early school leavers, Finnish data for non-disabled youth aged 18-24 is worse than the European average, while that for non-disabled youth aged 18-29 is better.

²⁷ <http://www.kela.fi/web/en/employment-in-retirement>.

²⁸ OECD (2010) *Sickness, Disability and Work: Breaking the Barriers: A Synthesis of Findings across OECD countries*.
http://ec.europa.eu/health/mental_health/eu_compass/reports_studies/disability_synthesis_2010_en.pdf.

²⁹ For the LFS AHM data see, Early school leavers
http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hlth_de010&lang=en
 and for tertiary educational attainment
http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hlth_de020&lang=en

Table 13: Early school leavers aged 18-24 and 18-29

Source: EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017

Note: The confidence intervals for disability group are large and so the reliability is low. It may be more useful to consider an average of several years.

Alternative data on disability and early school leavers provided by the national expert:

There is no national data on early school leavers. A recently published study of Kirjavainen et al. (2016)³⁰ points explicitly out how the increased support (individualized curriculums and assistance) at the lower secondary level education has also increased students' readiness to study at the upper secondary level. However, the study shows that the students with individualized curriculum are less likely to continue to the upper secondary level without any individualization of curriculum at the basic education. Moreover, the study points out that the share of students with partly or fully individualized curriculum continuing their studies directly at the upper secondary level is lower than those students with regular curriculum. The findings also prove that the transition of the students with individualized curriculum into the upper secondary level takes longer time (four years), and that they also tend to complete the studies slower and that their dropout rate is higher. Most of them also continue into the upper secondary vocational training and only a few graduate from academic upper secondary school. These findings are in line with previous studies.^{31 32}

³⁰ Kirjavainen, Tanja & Pulkkinen, Jonna & Jahnukainen, Markku (2016) Special education students in transition to further education: A four-year register-based follow-up study in Finland. *Learning and Individual Differences* 45, pp. 33–42.

³¹ Hakkarainen, Airi M. & Holopainen Leena K. & Savolainen, Hannu K. (2015) A Five-Year Follow-Up on the Role of Educational Support in Preventing Dropout From Upper Secondary Education in Finland. *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 48 (4), pp. 408–421.

³² Katariina Hakala, Reetta Mietola & Antti Teittinen (2013). Valinta ja valikointi ammatillisessa erityisopetuksessa [Choosing and selection in vocational special education]. Teoksessa: Kristiina Brunila, Katariina Hakala, Elina Lahelma & Antti Teittinen (toim.) (2013). *Ammatillinen koulutus ja*

According to the study of Kirjavainen et al. (2016), 2009 cohort of compulsory school students continuing their studies is divided into partially individualized curriculum (4.2%), fully individualized curriculum (2.3%), modified curriculum (0.1%) and school leavers without diploma (0.1%). There is information about disabled children in special education at basic education.³³ In 2007 around 7-8% of students were receiving full time special education and part-time around 22-23%. Of all enrolled students in compulsory schools, 4% were placed in regular classes, 2.6% in special classes and 1.4% in special schools. In 2010 there were 31.6% (175 367) of students in some form of special education. This does not mean an increased number of disabled children, but an increase of children with learning challenges by specific categorization in special education.³⁴ The shares are a bit different between the studies, which may be explained by different categorizing, as the amount of special children have not probably changed much.

2.3.2 Tertiary education

The EU-SILC sample for the target age group (aged 30-34) includes the following number of people reporting activity 'limitation' (a proxy for impairment/disability) although the number of missing observations is larger than the number of observations for activity limitation.

Table 14: EU-SILC sample size for the target age group 30-34 versus 30-39

	Age 30-34		Age 30-39	
	No activity 'limitation'	Activity 'limitation'	No activity 'limitation'	Activity 'limitation'
EU sample	23,233	2,793	49,559	6,572
National sample	542	160	1,128	313

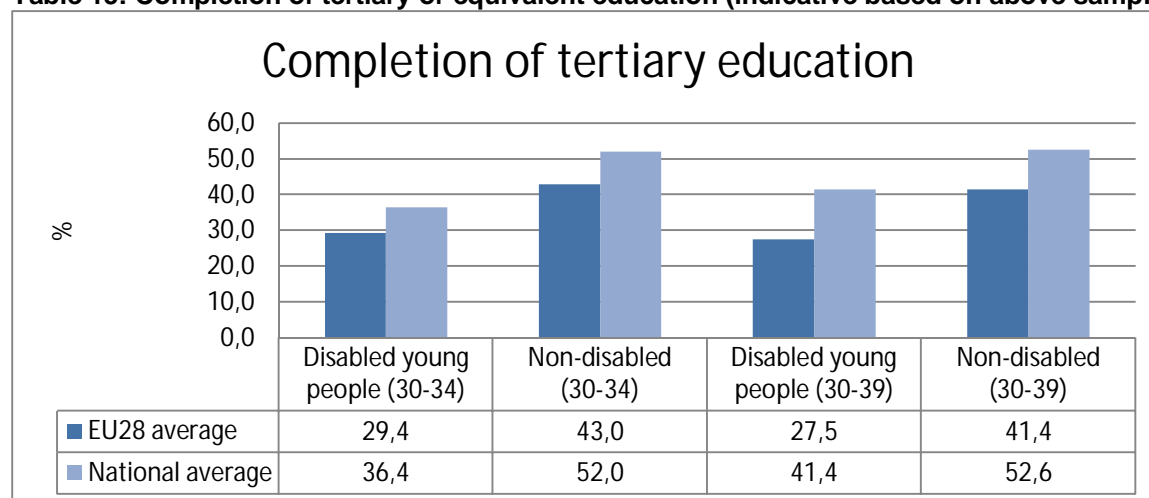
Source: EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017

The below Table 15 shows completion of tertiary or equivalent education in Finland and the European average. The data is disaggregated by disability and age (30-34 and 30-39). In all groups, the education level of Finland is higher in comparison with the European average. Non-disabled people of both age groups have much more opportunities to complete tertiary education than their peers with disabilities both in Finland and in Europe.

yhteiskunnalliset eronteot [Vocational Education and Societal Differentiation]. Helsinki: Gaudeamus, pp. 173–200.

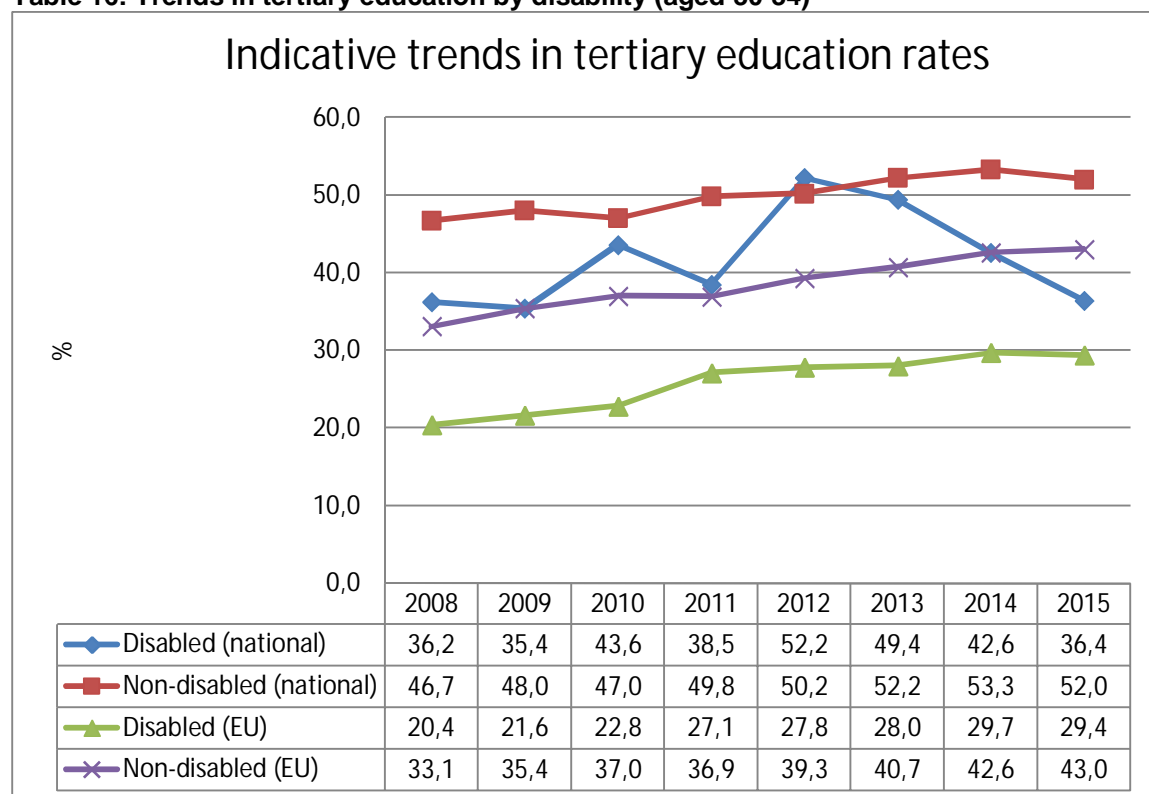
³³ Graham, J. Linda & Jahnukainen, Markku (2010) Wherefore art thou, inclusion? Analysing the development of inclusive education in New South Wales, Alberta and Finland. *Journal of Education Policy* (2) 26 <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/02680939.2010.493230>.

³⁴ Jahnukainen, Markku & Pösö, Tarja & Kivirauma, Joel & Heinonen, Hanna (2012) Erityisopetuksen ja lastensuojelun kehitys ja nykytila [The current situation of special education and child protection in Finland]. In Jahnukainen, Markku (eds.) *Lasten erityishuolto ja -opetus Suomessa*. Vastapaino, pp. 15–56.

Table 15: Completion of tertiary or equivalent education (indicative based on above sample)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017

The survey sample is not sufficient to provide robust trend data disaggregated by gender in the narrow EU2020 target age group. In general, the achievement of tertiary education was higher for women than for men in both disabled and non-disabled groups as shown in the Table 16.

Table 16: Trends in tertiary education by disability (aged 30-34)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017 (and preceding UDBs)

Fluctuations in trends for people with impairments should be treated with caution at the

Alternative data on disability and tertiary education provided by the national expert:

There are no current data on the completion rate of tertiary education, but in 1998 2.8% of all moderately or severely disabled people completed a lower tertiary degree and 2.2% a higher tertiary degree.³⁵ These rates are radically lower than in EU-SILC data, and the definition of disability may cause the difference. Thus, the rate is very low even among all Finnish disabled people. There happens to be rather accurate data on visually impaired people and 2012 data show that their tertiary education rate (18% of all visually impaired) is much higher than among other impairment groups.³⁶

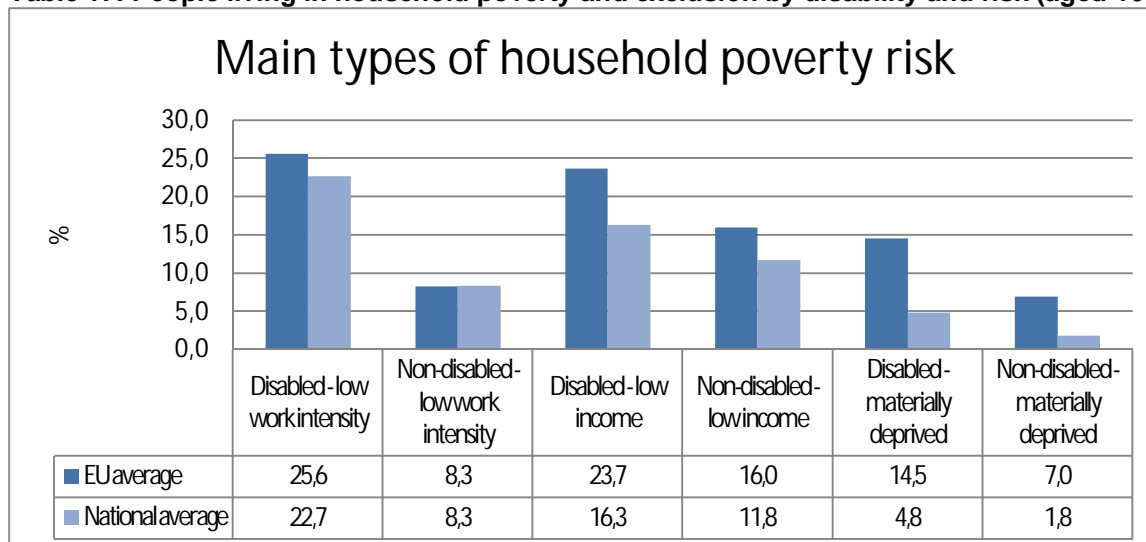
2.4 Poverty and social exclusion data

EU SILC data provides indicators of the key risks for people with disabilities. In addition to household risks of low work intensity, there are risks of low income (after social transfers), and material deprivation. These three measures are combined in the overall estimate of risk. The risks for older people do not include work intensity (Eurostat refers to the age group 0-59 for this measure). The survey does not distinguish 'activity limitation' (the proxy for impairment/disability) for children under the age of 16. Relevant data provided by the national expert is added where available.

The below Table 17 shows much higher poverty risk for disabled people in terms of low work intensity, low income and material deprivation both in Finland and in European countries on average in comparison with peers without a disability. The Finnish numbers are better than the European average in all groups. Even though the gaps are smaller between disabled and non-disabled people, it is clear that disabled people are prone to poverty in all identified terms also in Finland. The main types of household poverty are low work intensity and low income.

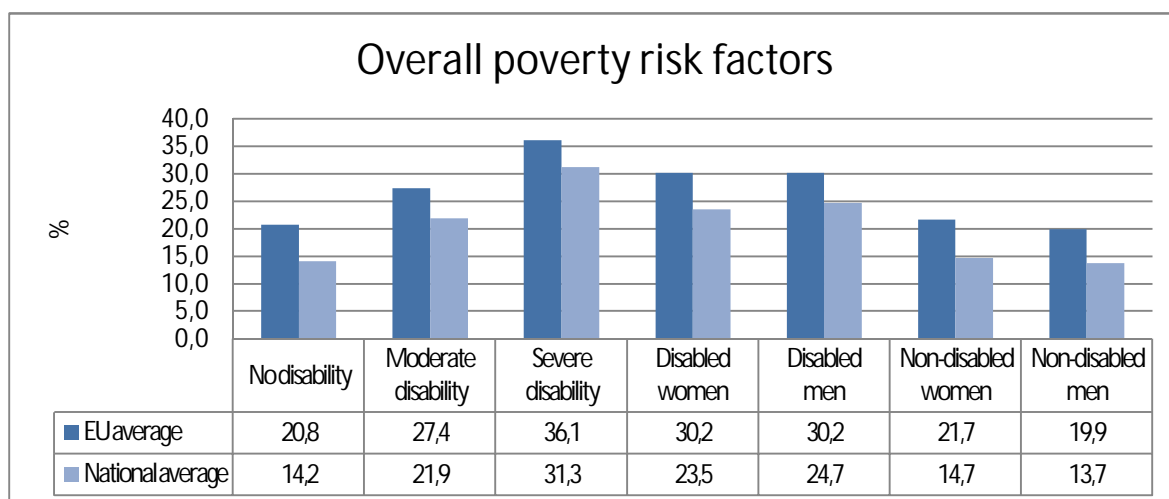
³⁵ Savtchenko, Victor & Suikkanen, Asko & Linnakangas, Ritva (2010) Vammaiset ja pitkäaikaissairaat Suomen maankunnissa: prevelanssi, työllisyys ja tulot [Disabled and long-term ill in Finnish municipalities]. Yhteiskuntapolitiikka (1) 75
<http://www.julkari.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/101548/savtschenko.pdf?sequence=1>.

³⁶ http://www.nkl.fi/fi/etusivu/nakeminen/julkaisu/nvrek_vuosikirja/3_2_koulutusaste_ja_alat.

Table 17: People living in household poverty and exclusion by disability and risk (aged 16-59)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017

The below Table 18 shows poverty risk of people in Finland and Europe. The data is disaggregated by gender, disability and severity of disabilities. The poverty risk is lower in Finland in comparison with the European average in all groups. Disabled people have higher risk of poverty, especially when the disability is severe.

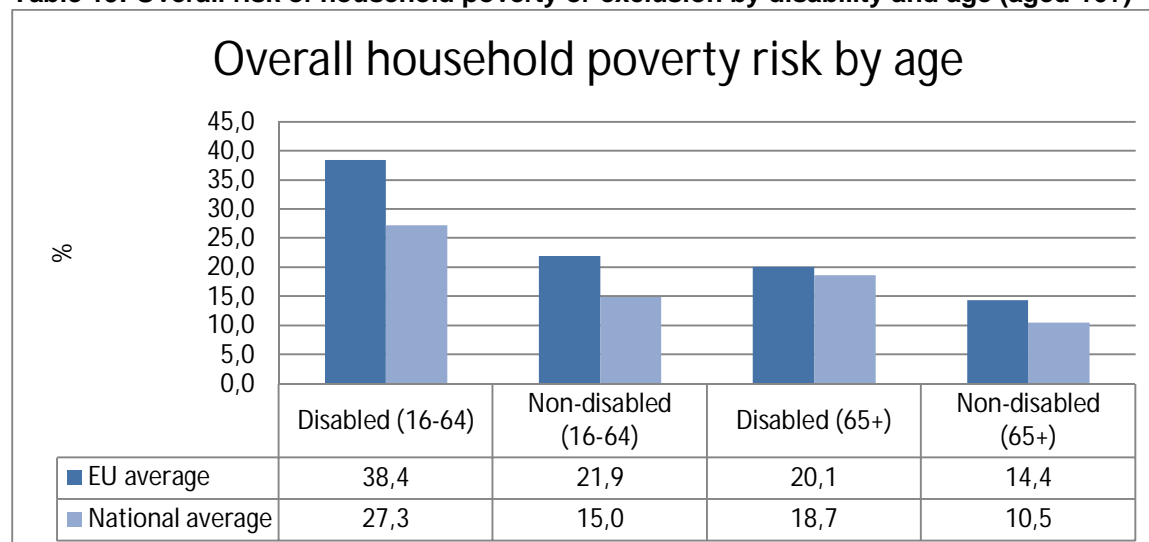
Table 18: People living in household poverty and exclusion by disability and gender (aged 16+)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017

The below Table 19 shows overall household poverty risk by disability and age in Finland and in Europe. Both in Finland and Europe in general, disabled people of both age groups (16-64 and 65+) have higher risk of household poverty than peers without a disability. The risks are higher for the age group 16-64 in comparison with that of 65+ both in Finland and in Europe. The risks in Finland are smaller than the

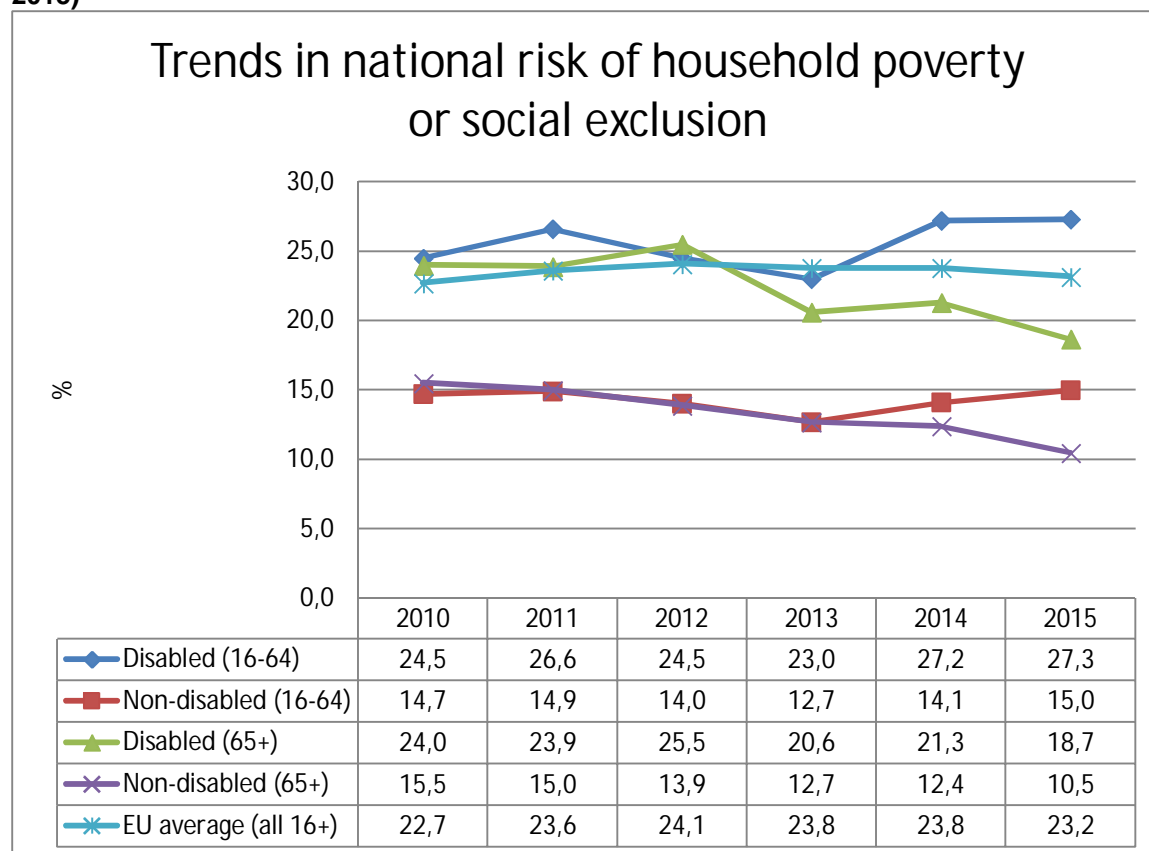
European average. However, the gap of disabled and non-disabled people aged 65+ is bigger than the European average gap.

Table 19: Overall risk of household poverty or exclusion by disability and age (aged 16+)



Source: EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017

The below Table 20 shows trends in household risk of poverty disaggregated by disability and age (16-64 and 65+) in Finland. The European average also appears for reference. The risks of non-disabled people of both age groups are lower than the European average throughout the years between 2010 and 2015. The risks of disabled people of age group 16-64 are higher than the European average, while recently risks of disabled people of age group 65+ are lower. Disabled people have much higher risks than peers without a disability in Finland do.

Table 20: Trends in household risk of poverty and exclusion by disability and age (EU-SILC 2015)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2015 – version of October 2017 (and previous UDB)

Alternative data on disability and risk of poverty or social exclusion provided by the national expert:

There are no alternative data from recent years. A report by the National Institute for Health and Welfare shows that in 2005 there were 22% of disabled people below the poverty threshold, while in 1995 the share was 12%.³⁷ In 2005 relative poverty rate in the whole population was 12% and in 1995 7%. Therefore, the current situation in EU-SILC is similar to that in the 2005 Finnish data. In 2002 disabled people's average (taxable) income was €15,144, while it was €24,374 for the whole population. Disabled women's average income was only €13,145 whereas men's was €16,773. The average income of economically inactive disabled persons was €11,200 and that of economically active persons was €21,600 in 2002.³⁸ This information shows disabled women seem to have the weakest socioeconomic position in Finland, which differs from recent EU-SILC poverty risk results.

³⁷ Parrukoski, Sanna & Karjalainen, Jouko (2009) Tietoja vammaisten työllisyydestä ja toimeentulosta. Helsinki: Terveysten ja hyvinvoinnin laitos, [Knowledge on employment and livelihood of disabled people] <http://www.koyhyyskirjoitukset.org/alustuksia/2009-2/Tilastoja%20vammaisten%20k%F6yhyydest%E4.doc>.

³⁸ Linnakangas, Ritva; Suikkanen, Asko; Savtschenko, Victor; Virta, Lauri (2006) Uuden alussa vai umpikujassa?: Vammaiset matkalla yhdenvertaiseen kansalaisuuteen. Stakes. [Socioeconomic situation of disabled people in Finland] <https://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/77056>.

3 Description of the situation and trends in relation to each target area

3.1 Employment

The general employment rate in Finland is high and the disability employment gap appears relatively narrow, compared to EU averages. This is less evident in terms of employment where the indication is close to the average (i.e. the activity rate is high but significant numbers of disabled job seekers do not find jobs in the labour market). The 2017 EU Alert Mechanism Report flagged a concern with growth in youth unemployment and long-term unemployment in Finland. Disabled people are over-represented in these groups and it is thus important to consider their situation and policies to address it.

When comparing EU-SILC data and the national estimates from the ministry, the employment rates (57% and 58%) are close enough to each other that one can say that the information is comparable. Young disabled people have the lowest employment rate in the data, which can be explained by low educational qualifications of those who are not in tertiary or vocational education. The employment rate is slightly lower among older disabled people. This difference is related to the higher rate of their health conditions, especially in physically demanding occupations.³⁹ The Finnish data show that economic cycles do not influence significantly the unemployment rate of people with partial work incapacity, as they do for non-disabled people, which indicates that people with impairments face other structural barriers than economy. Employers and disabled job seekers have had problems to find each other in the labour market because of lack of knowledge, false expectations and negative attitudes. Employers' negative attitudes make it difficult for disabled people to find a job, but employers' good experiences encourage employing a disabled person in the future. Negative attitudes related to the lack of knowledge are the main barrier for employment. Thus, the government has put an effort into easing employment by social campaigns for employers and by incentives such as wage-subsidies.^{40 41 42} The inactivity and low-wage traps can be rather considerable among low-skilled and long-term unemployed, which means that policy makers need to pay extra attention to people with partial work incapacity. Income traps caused by stiff work contracts and fear of losing social security benefits are major reasons of inactivity also for disabled people. Finland is facing the problem

³⁹ Pensola, Tiina & Gould, Raija & Polvinen, Anu (2010) Ammatit ja työkyvyttömyyseläkkeet: Masennukseen, muihin mielenterveyden häiriöihin sekä tuki- ja liikuntaelinten sairauksiin perustuvat eläkkeet. [Occupations and disability pension]. Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden tutkimuskeskus 2010:16 <http://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/111777>.

⁴⁰ Ekholm, Elina & Teittinen, Antti (2014) Vammaiset nuoret ja työntekijä kansalaisuus: Osallistumisen esteitä ja edellytyksiä [Barriers and opportunities of working for young disabled people]. Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden tutkimuskeskus 133. Kelan tutkimusosasto, Helsinki.

⁴¹ Hietala, Outi & Sippola, Aulikki & Riipinen, Markku & Lampinen, Pauliina & Nevalainen, Marja (2015) Kaikille sopiva työ ja työyhteisö [A Model to improve employment of disabled people and people with partial work incapacity]. Final report of development project. The Finnish Work Environment Fund <http://www.vammas.fi/kaikille-sopiva-tyo-tiedote/>.

⁴² Linnakangas, Ritva; Suikkanen, Asko; Savtschenko, Victor; Virta, Lauri (2006) Uuden alussa vai umpikujassa?: Vammaiset matkalla yhdenvertaiseen kansalaisuuteen. Stakes. [Socioeconomic situation of disabled people in Finland] <https://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/77056>.

of the ageing society that are reflected in the labour market. As a consequence, the government wants to recognize skills of migrants and people with different backgrounds better than earlier, and this could provide an opportunity to enhance the labour market integration of disabled people with unrecognized skills and talents.

3.2 Education

The 2017 EU Joint Employment Report flagged the general NEET rates in Finland as something 'to watch'. The rate of early school leavers is relatively low in Finland, but the dropout rate among disabled people is twice that of non-disabled people. Thus, one can assume that disability indicates shortened educational routes. The reasons for the very low education of severely and moderately disabled young people include discouraging policies and practices. There is some evidence that instead of encouraging young disabled people to seek higher education, officials have guided disabled youngsters directly onto disability pension.⁴³ As the Finnish data⁴⁴ indicate, only small amount of students are in full-time special classes or schools and the relatively low amount of early school leavers indicate successful inclusion in elementary education. The transition into the upper secondary level does not anymore indicate negative relation to special education, but the limited path into upper secondary vocational education still holds, as very few children with special education background complete academic upper secondary diploma (Kirjavainen et al. 2016).⁴⁵

Unlike EU-SILC, the old Finnish data⁴⁶ from the year 1998 give a poor impression of tertiary level completion, and it is unlikely that the situation has improved radically under similar policy and practices, as the ministry's disability program still concentrates on the same issues. It seems that the Finnish education policy has not encouraged disabled youngsters to carry on studying after the upper secondary level. After upper secondary education, the completion rates decrease drastically. One can assume that the degree of disability is an important factor, when designing a more equal educational system for young disabled individuals. In addition, social inclusion to the educational system – regardless the disability pension entitlement – is an essential aspect to improve the educational situation of disabled people. Guaranteeing educational training for everyone despite the budget cuts is continuously an important issue. The new scope for increasing work-based learning opportunities could also be utilized for disabled people, as they often have lower qualifications of skills.⁴⁷

⁴³ Savtchenko, Victor & Suikkanen, Asko & Linnakangas, Ritva (2010) Vammaiset ja pitkäaikaissairaat Suomen maakunnissa: prevelanssi, työllisyys ja tulot [Disabled and long-term ill in Finnish municipalities]. Yhteiskuntapolitiikka (1) 75.

⁴⁴ Graham, J. Linda & Jahnukainen, Markku (2010) Wherefore art thou, inclusion? Analysing the development of inclusive education in New South Wales, Alberta and Finland. Journal of Education Policy (2) 26, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/02680939.2010.493230>.

⁴⁵ Kirjavainen, Tanja & Pulkkinen, Jonna & Jahnukainen, Markku (2016) Special education students in transition to further education: A four-year register-based follow-up study in Finland. Learning and Individual Differences 45, pp. 33–42.

⁴⁶ Savtchenko, Victor & Suikkanen, Asko & Linnakangas, Ritva (2010).

⁴⁷ Country Report Finland 2016.



3.3 Poverty and social inclusion

The EU-SILC data indicate that although the general risk of relative poverty after social transfers is very low in Finland, one of the lowest in the EU, it is higher for severely disabled people of working age. This is true also for the data on in-work poverty, where a very low general population risk can be compared to a moderate disability risk.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, disability poverty risks in Finland are ameliorated to a greater extent by social transfers than they are in many European countries.

According to Parrukoski and Karjalainen⁴⁹, a disabled person's income was in average 60% of the income of a non-disabled person in 2002. In the 2000s, the income gap between working and non-working disabled people has increased and the relative poverty of disabled people has risen, albeit along the non-disabled population. However, disabled people's relative poverty rate was considerably higher (25%) than that of the whole population (12%) in 2005. According to EU-SILC, it seems that in recent years the situation has remained rather similar with only slight changes, which means that disability pensions, disability benefits and disability services have not solved the problem of poverty and social exclusion of disabled people. The data show clearly that it is more difficult to change one's socioeconomic status when one has profound impairments and complex needs of assistance. A study by Linnankangas et al.⁵⁰ provides evidence that disabled women's individual income was lower than men's in 2002, so gender is also a disadvantage factor among disabled people. As the study of Polvinen et al.⁵¹ suggests, increasing work opportunities for disabled and chronically ill people improve their socioeconomic status.

In 2012, one in four recipients of a full disability pension was at risk of poverty when using the 60 % of median income threshold. The highest risk of poverty was among people living alone (nearly 50 %) and those under 45 (around 33 %).⁵²

⁴⁸ Using corresponding EU-SILC 2014 data extracted from the Eurostat disability database (hlth_dpe050) <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/disability/data/database>

⁴⁹ Parrukoski, Sanna & Karjalainen, Jouko (2009) Tietoja vammaisten työllisyydestä ja toimeentulosta. Helsinki: Terveystien ja hyvinvoinnin laitos, [Data of employment and livelihood of disabled people].

⁵⁰ Linnankangas, Ritva; Suikkanen, Asko; Savtschenko, Victor; Virta, Lauri (2006) Uuden alussa vai umpikujassa?: Vammaiset matkalla yhdenvertaiseen kansalaisuuteen. Stakes. [Socioeconomic situation of disabled people in Finland] <https://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/77056>.

⁵¹ Polvinen, Anu & Gould, Raija & Lahelma, Eero & Martikainen, Pekka (2013) Socioeconomic differences in disability retirement in Finland: The contribution of ill-health, health behaviours and working conditions. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health* 41, 470–478
<http://sjp.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/03/26/1403494813482400.full.pdf+html>.

⁵² Rantala, Juha; Hietaniemi, Marjukka; Nyman, Heidi; Laaksonen, Mikko & Kuivalainen, Susan (eds.) (2017) Työkyvyttömyyseläkkeensaajien eläketurva ja toimeentulo 2000-luvulla. Eläketurvakeskuksen tutkimuksia 04/2017. http://www.etk.fi/wp-content/uploads/Tyokyvyttomyyselakkeensaajien_elaketurva_ja_toimeentulo_2000_luvulla.pdf



4 Assessment of policies in place to meet the relevant headline targets

Finland's 2017 NRP document referred to disability only once, in a passing reference to index linked cash benefits. Considering that Finland concluded its ratification of the UN CRPD in 2016, this presents a significant missed opportunity for disability mainstreaming. The disability equality gaps are clearly evidenced under each of the relevant EU2020 targets and the reforms of employment and social policies have specific impacts on disabled people in Finland. There is scope for considerable improvement on this issue in the next policy cycle.

4.1 Employment

The 2016 National Reform Programme of Finland highlighted the significance of extending work careers and eliminating early exit pathways from labour market. The emphasis was on the recent pension reform and its evaluation. The program does not specify people in terms of their impairments or reasons for leaving labour market. The strategic goal has changed its tone from a focus on people with partial work incapacity to more generic goals of employability, active job seeking and longer work careers. The focus is on pension expenditure reductions and on the sustainability gap in general governmental finances.⁵³

The pension reform has some beneficial effects on people retiring on a disability pension, because the reform increases the amount of disability pension for people retiring from 2017. The reform extends the time between disability pension and old age pension. However, the government plans to freeze the pension index for subsequent years, which will have a negative effect on disability pensions in the future.⁵⁴ In 2017 the National Pension index was lowered by 0.85% from the 2016 level. The change affected all benefits linked to the National Pension index, such as disability benefits, national pension and guaranteed pension.

From the beginning of year 2017 the minimum rehabilitation allowance for young people and rehabilitation allowance for vocational training were increased to the level of guaranteed pension. It has been argued that this change will promote the employment of people with partial workability.⁵⁵

One key emphasis on Finland's National Reform Programme of year 2017⁵⁶ is on promoting youth employment. The main target is NEET youth (not in education, employment or training), which is in line with the 2017 EU Alert Mechanism Report that identified NEET as an issue 'to watch' in Finland.

From the beginning of 2017, obligation to accept a job offer was tightened. That is, an unemployed person is required to accept a job offer even if its salary would be

⁵³ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2016/nrp2016_finland_en.pdf.

⁵⁴ The Country Report Finland (pp. 43).

⁵⁵ Finland's National Reform Programme Spring 2017.
<https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/79822>

⁵⁶ Finland's National Reform Programme Spring 2017.
<https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/79822>

lower than the unemployment benefit. In addition, the geographical area where a job offer needs to be accepted was enlarged. Unemployed people are also required to use their own vehicle for commuting to work. Furthermore, the period of receiving the earnings-related unemployment benefit was shortened from 500 days to 400 days, which was a major cut to the benefit system.⁵⁷

In Finland, public debate has highlighted that increasing the obligations of social security benefit receivers to participate in paid work is not necessarily the best way to deal with people with work incapacities because they already face many hardships. For example, Professor Heikki Hiilamo⁵⁸, a key figure in social policy debate, would expand participatory social security to more voluntary activities, thus paying attention to peoples' own preferences and their living conditions and life situations in a better way than currently. Such a change would also affect the situation of a number of disabled people. He has also suggested that people receiving social assistance could be included in such participatory activities and thus receive social assistance conditionally. This kind of a social security model could provide meaningful activities for disabled people, as well, while at the same time it would tighten the eligibility criteria of social assistance, which might prove difficult for some disabled persons.

Concerning the disability policy targets on raising work capacity, prolonging careers and increasing disabled people's working opportunities, some positive change is taking place in Finland. The emphasis of the policy is clearly on older workers and it aims to prevent their early retreat from the labour market into disability pension. Investments in rehabilitation of young people are also expected to decrease social exclusion. Applying the 'linear model' related to the idea of a single benefit system, promoted by OECD, would increase the amount of the earnings of disabled people, as additional income would not decrease their benefits.⁵⁹ Moreover, the linear model would encourage disabled people to seek work opportunities. On the other hand, a Finnish foundation that promotes equal employment conditions of disabled people, people with partial work capacity and long-term ill people has argued that there is a widespread problem in Finland that people are not aware of already existing benefits that support employment.⁶⁰

The above-mentioned policy targets will face the challenges of a difficult labour market situation in the current economic situation. Supporting wage-subsidized work contracts can enable more work and career opportunities for disabled people, though Kangasharju and Venetoklis⁶¹ have argued that wage-subsidies have only a small

⁵⁷ Finland's National Reform Programme Spring 2017.

<https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/79822>

⁵⁸ Hiilamo, Heikki (2014) Voisiko osallistava sosiaaliturva lisätä osallisuutta? [Could inclusive social security increase societal inclusiveness?] Yhteiskuntapolitiikka (1) 79, pp. 82–86

⁵⁹ The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (2013).

⁶⁰ Puroaho, Petri (2014) Väli työmarkkinat osana työelämää [Intermediate labour market supporting employment]. Kokous Uudenmaan työllisyyspoliittista avustusta saaville hankkeille. Vates foundation. http://www.vates.fi/media/projektit/tiivistelmat_2014/uusimaa/18.9.2014-valityomarkkinat-osana-tyoelamaa-projektin-esittely-hanketoimijoille.pdf.

⁶¹ Kangasharju, Aki & Venetoklis, Takis (2003) Do wage-subsidies increase employment in firms? VATT discussion papers. Government Institute for Economic Research, Helsinki https://www.vatt.fi/file/vatt_publication_pdf/k304.pdf.

effect on increasing employment in private companies and may even cause exploitation of short and cheap labour force or substitution of other costs. The implementation needs to support fair and lasting contracts with appropriate criteria for wage-subsidies. Work is the most efficient way to increase disabled people's income and reduce their poverty risks and the means of the intermediate labour market can support career opportunities in a long run as Kangasharju et al.⁶² point out. The government needs to be aware of the current problems of the intermediate labour market because the measures, e.g. work try-out practices, may have non-planned employability effects, hindering access to the actual labour market. In a sense, there is a risk of discrete and unconnected employment practices and provisions. For young disabled people, education is a more relevant issue, since it enables better work opportunities later in life.

The Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014)⁶³ was enacted in 2014 to promote everyone's equal opportunities to training and personal development, to obtain services and to advance their career. Its implementation and supervision is expected to combat discrimination experienced, among others, by disabled people in different areas of life. It is thus expected also to promote the employment of disabled people.

The 2017 Country Report of Finland states that the Government intends to abolish detailed qualification requirements for municipal staff in order to cut costs with 1 billion euros⁶⁴. The implications of this policy change for disabled people are not clear. It is possible that it will bring problems to many services that disabled people are using, including those that are indispensable for the employment of disabled persons. There is thus a risk that this change may weaken disabled people's opportunities to participate in the labour market as well as their quality of life. It would be important to evaluate the consequences of this change to the provision and quality of various kinds of disability services.

4.2 Education

4.2.1 Reducing the rates of early school leavers

As mentioned earlier, the NEET-youth are a key focus group in the National Reform Programme of Finland⁶⁵. The goal is to develop the education system and the training of teachers so that it would take the needs of various learners, especially children and young people in most vulnerable position, into account better than currently.

⁶² The Ministry of Employment and the Economy (2013) Selvitystyö välityömarkkinoiden mahdollisuuksista tukea vaikeasti työllistyvien työelämään osallistumista ja työmarkkinoille pääsyä. [A report on the opportunities of the intermediate labour market] http://www.tem.fi/files/35574/TEMrap_7_2013.pdf.

⁶³ Yhdenvertaisuuslaki 1325/2014. <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2014/20141325>

⁶⁴ Country Report Finland 2017. Commission Staff Working Document. 2017 European Semester: Assessment of progress on structural reforms, prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, and results of in-depth reviews under Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011. <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2017-european-semester-country-report-finland-en.pdf>

⁶⁵ Finland's National Reform Programme 2017. <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/79822>

The disability program of the government emphasizes counselling of disabled students so that they may find the best possible educational path and occupation. However, there is a lack of concrete implementation and practices concerning how this should be done. As Katriina Hakala et al.⁶⁶ point out, the education system does not have any programmes or degrees for intellectually disabled students and the system overemphasizes pre-vocational programs that are guiding disabled youth to narrow educational paths between special education, subsidized employment and social services.

Overall, the government's policy⁶⁷ primarily aims at the educational retraining of people with work incapacity in order to prolong their careers. The government plans to raise the rehabilitation support for younger disabled people, who in particular are vulnerable to social exclusion. This would increase the possibilities for disabled youth to seek suitable rehabilitation instead of going directly to disability pension or unemployment benefit. However, the rehabilitation benefit cannot cover the costs of upper secondary general education, unless it is a further educational program in order to employ an unemployed disabled person who has insufficient labour market competence. Thus, the policy ought to have some practical solutions for the tremendous rate of disabled school leavers in upper secondary and tertiary education.

Since 1 January 2015 the legislation has set an obligation to participate in one-year long pre-school education at the age of six. Disabled children can start the pre-school period already at the age of five because of extended compulsory elementary education. In the special education groups, 72% of the teaching assistants had a proper qualification in 2002.⁶⁸

4.2.2 Increasing the level of completed tertiary education

As noted in earlier ANED reports and in previous research, disabled people's tertiary education is a problem in Finland. The educational policy for disabled people is focusing only on vocational paths and careers.⁶⁹ According to the Ministry of Education, accessibility of students with physical impairments should be a priority in

⁶⁶ Katariina Hakala, Reetta Mietola & Antti Teittinen (2013). Valinta ja valikointi ammatillisessa erityisopetuksessa [Choosing and selection in vocational special education]. Teoksessa: Kristiina Brunila, Katariina Hakala, Elina Lahelma & Antti Teittinen (toim.) (2013). Ammatillinen koulutus ja yhteiskunnalliset eronteot [Vocational Education and Societal Differentiation]. Helsinki: Gaudeamus, pp. 173–200.

⁶⁷ The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (2013) Osatyökykyiset työssä -ohjelma: Osatyökykyisten työllistymistä edistävien säädösmuutostarpeiden ja palvelujen arviointi. [The programme for people with partial work capacity (2013–2015)] <http://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/126062>.

⁶⁸ The Government of Finland (2004) Valtioneuvoston selonteko eduskunnalle esiopetusuudistuksen vaikutuksista ja asetettujen tavoitteiden toteutumisesta. [A report on the impacts and effectiveness of the pre-school education reform] http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2004/liitteet/opm_186_opm32.pdf?lang=fi.

⁶⁹ Katariina Hakala, Reetta Mietola & Antti Teittinen (2013). Valinta ja valikointi ammatillisessa erityisopetuksessa [Choosing and selection in vocational special education]. In Kristiina Brunila, Katariina Hakala, Elina Lahelma & Antti Teittinen (eds.) (2013). Ammatillinen koulutus ja yhteiskunnalliset eronteot [Vocational Education and Societal Differentiation]. Helsinki: Gaudeamus, pp. 173–200.

higher education policy.⁷⁰ However, it is promising that the government has attached weight to the education of disabled youth by raising rehabilitation benefits and, thus, preventing the need for supplementary benefits.

Accessibility issues are discussed in the the Universities Act 558/2009 and the Act of Universities of Applied Sciences 932/2014. According to the Acts, functional ability or health-related issues cannot prevent anyone from becoming a student. On the other hand, it is also stated that students who are not able to fulfill the tasks or practices included in the studies, should not be enrolled as students. Accessibility is required to secure that everyone can study but the law requires only reasonable accommodations. These Acts have led to action in universities and universities of applied sciences as these have focused attention to accessibility issues and created organisational structures that monitor accessibility at different levels and different functions within the institutions of higher education.

4.3 Poverty and social inclusion

Reducing the poverty risk is highly relevant regarding social inclusion. The government's policy underlines work and prolonging careers. Traditionally work has been the main way to make one's life better but for many disabled people this mainstream solution is laid with difficulties. More flexible labour market structures and employment services in order to dissolve possible welfare traps provide an opportunity to employ more people with partial work incapacity. However, in the recent economic situation the government's policy objectives have been ambitious considering that there has been only little effort into educational improvements of disabled individuals and that the employment resources in general are already limited. Moreover, there should also be a plan to influence the negative attitudes of employers towards disabled workers. A recent study by Hietala et al. (2015) points out that the work community's ability to welcome a person with partial work incapacity is more relevant than the competence of the person if the organization can recognize the benefits and skills of a diverse workforce.⁷¹

It would be essential to consider other ways to increase social inclusion of disabled people, especially of those with severe impairments. Subjective experience of poverty is related to social connections. Stronger social wellbeing can decrease the harmful effects of material and relative poverty. Work, of course, is one way to increase also social wellbeing. The government is trying to make employment and work opportunities easier for disabled people with, for instance, social entrepreneurship.⁷²

⁷⁰ Laaksonen, Elina (2005) Esteetön opiskelu. Report (6) [Accessible studying]. Ministry of Education http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2005/liitteet/opm_297_opm06.pdf?lang=fi.

⁷¹ Hietala, Outi & Sippola, Aulikki & Riipinen, Markku & Lampinen, Pauliina & Nevalainen, Marja (2015) Kaikille sopiva työ ja työyhteisö [A Model to improve employment of disabled people and people with partial work incapacity]. Final report of development project. The Finnish Work Environment Fund <http://www.vamlas.fi/kaikille-sopiva-tyo-tiedote/>.

⁷² The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (2013) Osatyökykyiset työssä -ohjelma: Osatyökykyisten työllistymistä edistävien säädösmuutostarpeiden ja palvelujen arviointi. [The programme for people with partial work capacity (2013–2015)] <http://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/126062>.



One solution to combat poverty is the basic income scheme pilot that started in the beginning of 2017. The aim with the pilot is to explore individual responses to changes in the benefit system and thus to support the designing of a future social security system. Results of this pilot are not yet available.⁷³

The government has for a long time been planning an amendment for reforming the disability legislation. During 2016 and 2017, the process has finally progressed considerably and now the aim is that the legislation would enter Parliamentary debate in spring 2018 and that the new disability law would come into effect in 2020. The main targets of this reform are to integrate different services and to make them more equal and available to all disabled people regardless of their impairment. The law will combine the disability service law and the developmental disability law. Services are planned to be more efficient and equal without separating disabled people into different groups. Integration of different services is the planned solution for this goal; for example, employment services, work rehabilitation and health care are planned to be integrated under the same system. This amendment is linked to the ongoing major reform of social and health care services (SOTE reform, see below).^{74 75}

The implementation of a piece of EU-oriented legislation, the Law of Public Procurement and Licensing Contracts, has proven problematic for disabled people in Finland. The Government argues in the 2017 Country Report⁷⁶ that the public procurement functions well in Finland. The reason for this positive assessment is that only the process is considered in the report while the outcomes for people have not been evaluated or reported. In Finland, also essential care and housing services for disabled people are nowadays under procurement. A large part of these services are provided by for-profit or non-profit organisations and, after the end of each contract period that usually lasts for 3 or 5 years, care and housing services are put under competitive tendering. The procurement process has often led to a change of providers, which has led to occasions where the staff working in care and housing units has changed several times. In some occasions, disabled people have been forced to move due to the procurement process. Such changes have had deep and negative effects on the everyday lives of many disabled people in Finland. This situation has led to protests from disabled people, their families and organisations. For example, 12 June 2017 the Service Foundation for People with an Intellectual Disability started a campaign in order to have the a section of the Public Procurement Act changed. According to the initiative, Paragraph 16 of the Act should include the following statement: "This law does not apply to the procurement of those services, which are essential for the everyday life of people with disabilities." ⁷⁷

⁷³ Country Report Finland 2017

⁷⁴ Autio, Anu & Konttinen, Juha-Pekka & Sjöblom, Stina (2014) Tulevaisuuden vammaispalvelut [Disability services in the future]. THL
http://www.asiantuntijapaivat.fi/files/3511/B2_Tulevaisuuden_vammaispalvelut.pdf

⁷⁵ The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (2015) Vammaislainsäädännön uudistamistyöryhmän loppuraportti [Reformation of the disability legislation: final report]
<http://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/125919>

⁷⁶ Country Report Finland 2017

⁷⁷ OM 64/52/2017 <https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/2538>

Living in institutions segregates people from the society. Deinstitutionalisation of people with intellectual disabilities has been moving forward slowly in Finland. Deinstitutionalisation in Finland has been promoted by two Government Resolutions on Securing Individual Housing and Services for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities, adopted in 2010⁷⁸ and 2012.⁷⁹ The first Resolution established the KEHAS programme,⁸⁰ which aimed at the systematic realisation of community-based living with necessary support for 3,600 persons with intellectual disabilities between 2010 and 2015. The second Resolution defined the next steps for the KEHAS programme, the overall goal of which is to finish the deinstitutionalisation process by 2020 and to ensure that no person with an intellectual disability lives in an institution after the year 2020. However, according to a recent assessment of the KEHAS programme, the new housing units have largely consisted of group homes with places for 15 or more residents, while the implementation of decentralised housing solutions has been too modest.⁸¹ Institution-like living in the new housing units has become a realistic risk.

Disabled people are more likely to experience discrimination than other people. In addition, especially disabled women and girls, disabled immigrants and disabled persons belonging to language, cultural, sexual or gender minorities, face the risk of multiple discrimination.⁸² According to Eurobarometer 2012 data, 42% of Finnish citizens estimated that discrimination based on disability is widespread in Finland.⁸³ Disabled children and the youth encounter discrimination in schools, according to a survey published by the Ministry of the Interior.⁸⁴ The Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014)⁸⁵ tries to combat these phenomena. According to the Act, authorities, schools and workplaces are required to draw a plan to promote equality and to prevent discrimination. The National Non-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal of Finland supervises compliance with the Non-Discrimination Act and the Act on Equality between Women and Men (Equality Act) both in private activities and in public administrative and commercial activities.

Finland's 2017 National Reform Programme (NRP) uses considerable space to describe the ongoing major reform of social and health care services (SOTE reform). This reform is presented in the NRP as a key method to fill 'the sustainability gap in

⁷⁸ Finland, Government Resolution on Securing Individual Housing and Services for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities. <http://stm.fi/documents/1271139/1357028/Kehitysvammaisten+asumisen+ja+siihen+liittyvien+palveluiden+j%C3%A4rjest%C3%A4minen.pdf/004d06c5-a9f4-4bad-bec0-0907edd142a6>

⁷⁹ Finland, Government Resolution on Securing Individual Housing and Services for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities. Available at: <http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/71490>.

⁸⁰ KEHAS (The Housing Programme for Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities 2010-2015. www.thl.fi/web/vammaispalvelujen-kasikirja/itsenaisen-elaman-tuki/asuminen/kehitysvammaisten-asumisohjelman-kehakas

⁸¹ Karinen et al. (2016) Yksilölliseen ja monimuotoiseen asumiseen: Kehitysvammaisten asumisen ohjelman arviointi asumisratkaisujen osalta. Helsinki. Ympäristöministeriön Raportti 18/2016.

⁸² Human Right Center 2015

⁸³ European Commission (2012). *Discrimination in the EU in 2012; Special Eurobarometer 393*.

⁸⁴ Paula Kankkunen, Päivi Harinen, Elina Nivala and Mari Tapio (2010). *Kuka ei kuulu joukkoon: Lasten ja nuorten kokema syrjintä Suomessa*. Publications of the Ministry of the Interior, 36/2010.

⁸⁵ Yhdenvertaisuuslaki 1325/2014. <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2014/20141325>

general government finances' as the reform is planned to curb growth in healthcare and social welfare costs by EUR 3 billion. At the same time, the reform aims to improve healthcare and social welfare as well as integration of basic and specialised services. A key instrument of the reform is to introduce (or actually, widen) consumer choice under the title 'freedom of choice' (*valinnanvapaus*) so that service users could in many cases choose the provider from a list of alternative (primarily for-profit) providers. Another part of the reform plan aims to introduce personal budgets to disabled and older people. Furthermore, the plan is to create a new county government level, to include 18 counties in Finland, that would take over the responsibility for almost all social and health care, which is at the moment at the responsibility of 311 municipalities.⁸⁶

Overall, the reform is highly ambitious but many health and social care experts have directed heavy criticism to the reform plans of the government. First, the goal to save EUR 3 billion of costs has been questioned by practically all experts. The government has been unable to prove what mechanisms in the reform will bring about these savings. A number of experts have highlighted several details of the reform plan that might actually lead to increasing, not decreasing costs. Second, criticism has highlighted the difficulty to balance and combine the various goals of the planned reform. For example, a key goal has been to decrease health disparities between different social groups but the anticipated cuts in expenditures as well as the consumer choice model may be in contradiction with this goal.

Third, the strong push of the reform plan towards marketisation under 'freedom of choice' has been criticised both by political actors and by legal experts. 29 June 2017 the Constitutional Law Committee of the Parliament of Finland⁸⁷ concluded that an obligation placed in the reform plan for the new counties to incorporate all their service provisions, that is, a ban against providing services directly as a public governmental organisation, is against the Constitution. The Constitutional Law Committee stated that the planned reform could risk everyone's right to receive necessary social and health care services in an equal manner. The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman⁸⁸ also argued in their statement that 'freedom of choice' could place the most vulnerable people in a difficult position, because utilising of the freedom requires capability to make choices. The statement of the Constitutional Law Committee led the Government to withdraw their bill proposals. During summer and autumn 2017 they have been redrafted. According to the new schedule of the government, revised bills will be brought to parliamentary debate in March 2018 and the reform will be implemented in January 2020.

This Health, Social Service and Regional Government reform raises up a number of issues that affect disabled people. Disabled persons are a key user group of social and health care and all changes that influence the service system, influence the

⁸⁶ Finland's National Reform Programme Spring 2017.
<https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/79822>

⁸⁷ https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/Lausunto/Sivut/PeVL_26+2017.aspx

⁸⁸ <https://www.syrjinta.fi/documents/10181/10826/Lausunto+luonnoksesta+sosiaali-+ja+terveydenhuollon+valinnanvapauslains%C3%A4%C3%A4d%C3%A4nn%C3%B6ksi/fdfcce66-a84c-4529-b256-291b92f5b227>



situation of disabled people. However, disabled people and their organisations have not been properly included in the preparation and planning of the reform. As well, there are no detailed evaluations how the reform would change the everyday lives of disabled persons.

The planned implementation of personal budgets could enhance self-determination of a number of disabled persons and consumer choice may also bring more influence on one's service provisions. These changes may bring a long-needed shift towards person-centred service provision in Finnish social and health care. On the other hand, many disabled people will not be able to use personal budgets or benefit from consumer choice, at least not without adequate support. Such support is vital and needs to be available in order for disabled people to benefit from the reform.

A key issue concerning the reform is whether and how the planned savings in the social and health care expenditures will be carried out. If they are implemented, there is a serious risk that essential services of many disabled people will suffer considerably, which could lead to decreasing quality of life and lowering employment rates among disabled persons. Already recently, many disabled people have had major difficulties to receive the services they are legally entitled to from municipalities and substantive cuts in social and health care resources would probably multiply these problems.

4.4 Synergies between developments in the different areas

As mentioned, the government's policy focuses heavily on prolonging careers of people with partial work incapacity and on introducing more flexible labour market structures. Educational solutions are limited in individual rehabilitation programs. In order to reduce poverty and strengthen social inclusion, disabled people need both education and work. However, education policy of young disabled students still lacks concrete practices to create equal paths into academic upper secondary level and into tertiary education. There are a few ESIF funded projects, but it is always necessary to assess whether they lead to any long-lasting practices. However, the recent narrowing of the eligibility of some benefits, the strengthening conditionality and increased sanctions might make the entrance to labour markets more difficult for disabled people. There is also a risk that moving from unemployment to precarious and poorly paid employment will lead to a different type of trap, a low-wage trap.



5 Review of the European Semester from a disability perspective

5.1 Progress on disability-specific Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs)

There were no disability-specific CSRs for Finland in 2017 and disability was not referred to in the text of the Council's Recommendation.⁸⁹ However, the three general CSRs are all relevant to disabled people.

5.2 Progress on other CSRs from a disability perspective

The three country-specific recommendations (CSRs) to Finland in 2017 are:

1. Pursue its fiscal policy in line with the requirements of the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact, which implies to achieve its medium term budgetary objective in 2018, taking into account the allowances linked to unusual events, the implementation of the structural reforms and investments for which a temporary deviation is granted. Ensure timely adoption and implementation of the administrative reform to improve cost-effectiveness of social and healthcare services.
2. Promote the further alignment of wages with productivity developments, fully respecting the role of social partners. Take targeted active labour market policy measures to address employment and social challenges, provide incentives to accept work and promote entrepreneurship.
3. Continue to improve the regulatory framework and reduce the administrative burden to increase competition in services and to promote investment.

The 2017 CSR2 highlights the need for active labour market policy in order to promote employment. Disabled people are in need in such measures, as well, as they face several barriers to be involved in the labour market. As some sectors of the labour market are showing signs of lack of labour force, it is important to take the potential of disabled people into full use within the labour market. However, this requires that specific support measures and workplace modifications are available for disabled people and in this respect, not much progress has been visible in Finland.

The 2017 CSR3 emphasises competition in services. Finland has been very active to promote competition in many areas of service provisions, including social and health care. From the perspective of disabled people, this development has not been solely positive. An inflexible way to implement competitive tendering and procurement in care and housing services for disabled people (e.g. people with intellectual disabilities) has led to very problematic occasions where the quality of life of disabled people has become compromised in Finland. If competition is to be promoted further

⁸⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017H0809%2825%29>

in social and health care provisions in Finland, this needs to be balanced by new regulations and practices that secure that health, quality of life and employment prospects of disabled people are not jeopardised.

Finally, the 2017 CSR1 may be the most influential for disabled people as it recommends ‘timely adoption and implementation of the administrative reform to improve cost-effectiveness of social and healthcare services’. From the perspective of national economy, increased cost-effectiveness and substantial savings in the costs of health and social care are recommendable. However, from the perspective of disabled people, these objectives bring about many questions and risks. Besides recommending a swift implementation of the report, the Government of Finland would also need to be recommended to place major concern to the potential negative implications of the reform to disabled people. Already now, the access to many basic disability services is problematic in Finland and substantial savings in social and health care would very probably make the access even more difficult. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, disabled people should also be firmly involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the coming reform as it will have major effects on their everyday life.

5.3 Assessment of disability issues in the Country Report

Like the NRP, the 2017 Country Report (CR) does not even mention disability or disabled people.⁹⁰ Given the evidence of disability inequalities under each of the EU2020 goals, this is an important omission and one that should be monitored when preparing the 2018 Semester cycle. The implementation of Finland’s UN CRPD ratification presents an opportunity to mainstream disability concerns in all aspects of policymaking, which should be reflected in the analysis.

The Country Report stresses the same macroeconomic policy issues and the sustainability of public finances that the CSRs mostly focus on. Since 2016, the economy in Finland has showed signs of recovery, which are highlighted also in the Country Report. However, there seems to be a mismatch between unemployed people and the labour force needs of the growth sectors. Challenges also hamper the labour market opportunities of people with partial work incapacity, including disabled people. The pension reform enacted in 2016 is expected to prolong working careers of older people. Active labour market measures are seen beneficial for the Finnish workforce, especially for low-qualified workers, young people and older workers. Finland is investing considerable resources in active labour market policy measures. However, the Country Report does not mention how these measures are implemented on people with partial work incapacity. Disabled people have often a lack of educational qualifications whereas older workers (especially in manual labour) have some degree of work incapacities, which easily leads to decreased labour market competence.^{91 92}

⁹⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2017-european-semester-country-report-finland-en.pdf>

⁹¹ Linnakangas, Ritva; Suikkanen, Asko; Savtschenko, Victor; Virta, Lauri (2006) Uuden alussa vai umpikujassa?: Vammaiset matkalla yhdenvertaiseen kansalaisuuteen. Stakes. [Socioeconomic situation of disabled people in Finland] <https://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/77056>.



A rather large part of the CR describes the planned social and health care reform and emphasises the financial goal to save EUR 3 billion with this reform. However, as mentioned above, most experts in Finland see this financial objective to be overly optimistic as the financial results of the planned reform are very difficult to evaluate and as the reform plans include many elements that will probably increase expenditures, not decrease them. The CR does not focus any attention to potential negative implications of the reform, though a number of experts have argued that the reform might actually accentuate existing differences in health status and quality of life among different social groups. Specific groups that are deemed as 'most vulnerable', such as disabled people, may also face particular risks as a result of the changes that the reform will bring. However, the CR does not discuss these risks.

A basic income pilot scheme has been running in Finland since January 2017. The CR reports that the pilot scheme aims at modifying the social security system to better adjust to the changes in working life, as well as tackling the complexity of the current benefits system and creating incentives to accept work. 2 000 participants aged 25-58 who were receiving the basic unemployment benefit at the end of 2016 are included in the pilot scheme. Even the first results of this pilot are not yet available. It is also unclear whether the sample includes disabled people and whether the pilot can thus produce knowledge on the consequences of the basic income pilot for disabled persons.

Overall, the CR does not address any disability issues. The focus is on economic long-term sustainability and even reforms that will have major effects on the lives of disabled people, like the social and health care reform, are not discussed from the perspective of disabled people.

⁹² Polvinen, Anu & Gould, Raija & Lahelma, Eero & Martikainen, Pekka (2013) Socioeconomic differences in disability retirement in Finland: The contribution of ill-health, health behaviours and working conditions. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health* 41, 470–478.



6 Assessment of the structural funds ESIF 2014-2020 or other relevant funds in relation to disability challenges

The structural funds (ERDF & ESF) are spent on several funded projects that have more or less connection to disability policy. A search with search word “employment of people with disabilities and people with partial work incapacity” results in 1272 hits with 289 218 775 €⁹³ A more detailed search reveals that the target group of the projects is quite wide and not specifically aimed at disabled people.

The projects that target directly or include disabled people in their target group are included to the following listing. The focus of most of the projects is on preventing social exclusion of people whose labour market situation is weak. This means mainly young people, long-term unemployed and disabled people. Thus, most projects concern the current policy of the Stability and Growth Pact in Finland and in a broader perspective, the EU policy of strengthening social inclusion by education and work.

Here are some examples of projects:

Priority axis 3 Employment and labour mobility

- S20607: KELPO: pathways to working life of developmentally disabled people;
- S20317: Towards the service models of people with partial work incapacity;
- S20784: Work ability coordination pilots for better employment of people with work incapacities;

Altogether 10 projects, 3.27 M€

Priority axis 4 Education, professional skills and lifelong learning

- S20031: Special learner's learning curve;
- S20451: Special adolescents and supporting social inclusion of the digital time in multidisciplinary environments;
- S20261: Tervareitti - Participating guidance in the transition process for pupils in the secondary school

Altogether 5 projects, 1.0 M€

Priority axis 5 Social inclusion and combating poverty

- S20752: Securing inclusiveness and preventing marginalization in the claimant process of disability social care;
- S20476: Jump to it! – Leisure time project of young people needing special aid;
- S20615: Yes We Can;
- S20864: Woman of her own life - Improving the career management skills of women with disabilities
- S20543: Workshop;
- S20028: Towards better working ability, wellbeing and equality with online based distance rehabilitation.
- S20581: Job seeker –project;

Altogether 22 projects, 6.85 M€ Within all these projects there are three main themes that are also coordinated with the disability measures:

⁹³ <https://www.eura2014.fi/rrtiepa/index.php>.



1. Improving the situation of young people and other groups with a disadvantageous labour market situation,
2. Improving equality and preventing discrimination,
3. Improving social inclusion and preventing poverty.

Overall, these aims are broad and the further question is how well these policies are actually going to help disabled people and whether they are the best way to improve a disabled person's life. As, in total, they have been granted millions of euros, some sort of ex post evaluation would be needed to see if they generated any change in the end.



7 Recommendations

The statistics in Section 3 show clear trends of inequalities between disabled and non-disabled people that have not improved over the latest years. Progress has been very limited recently and more efforts from the Government of Finland are needed to reduce these inequalities. This requires addressing educational and labour market barriers as well as social exclusion of disabled people by new effective policies. In order to plan and implement such efforts, more reliable data and evidence need also to be collected.

More specifically, Finland has been given three country-specific recommendations (CSRs) in 2017 but, from a disability perspective, these recommendations and their implementation raise several serious concerns.

One of the CSRs highlighted Finland's need to develop active labour market policies in order to promote employment. However, from a disability perspective, disabled people have not been thoroughly included in active labour market policies and thus a lot of their potential has been left unused. When supported, many disabled persons can bring major contributions to economic life and other areas of the society through their work. However, this requires that specific support measures and workplace modifications are available for disabled people and, in this respect, not much development has been visible in Finland. Finland needs to be reminded that the skills and contributions of disabled people remain currently largely unused in the labour market and that disabled people need to be better included in active labour market policies.

Another CSR emphasised that Finland should further increase competition in services. However, when this CSR is implemented, the needs of disabled people need to be taken into consideration. Finland has recently introduced inflexible models in competitive tendering and procurement of care and housing services for disabled people (e.g. people with intellectual disabilities). These models have had very problematic implications, jeopardising the quality of life of many disabled people in Finland. If competition is to be further promoted in social and health care provisions in Finland, this needs to be balanced by new regulations and practices that secure that health, quality of life and employment prospects of disabled people are not risked as consequence.

Moreover, one CSR recommended 'timely adoption and implementation of the administrative reform to improve cost-effectiveness of social and healthcare services'. From the perspective of national economy, increased cost-effectiveness and savings in the costs of health and social care are recommendable. However, from the perspective of disabled people, these objectives bring about many questions and risks to both quality and quantity of disability services. Besides recommending a swift implementation of the reform, the Government of Finland would also need to be recommended to place major concern to the potential negative implications of the reform to disabled people. Already now, the access to many basic disability services is problematic in Finland, due to lack of resources and will to support disabled people at the local level, and substantial savings in social and health care would very



probably make the access even more difficult. Based on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, disabled people should also be firmly involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the social and health care reform as it will have major effects in their everyday life.

The lack of attention to disability issues by the Government of Finland can also be seen in that its 2017 NRP referred to disability only once, in a passing reference. Considering that Finland concluded its ratification of the UN CRPD in 2016, this presents a significant missed opportunity for disability mainstreaming. The disability equality gaps are clearly evidenced under each of the relevant EU2020 targets and the reforms of employment and social policies have specific impacts on disabled people in Finland. There is scope for considerable improvement on this issue in the next policy cycle.